

APRIL 26, 2004

WAL-MART



ROLLING BACK
PUBLIC EDUCATION
PAGE 22

IN THESE TIMES

ESCALATING VIOLENCE IN THE GAZA STRIP • 6

KAREN KWIATKOWSKI CASTIGATES NEOCONS • 10

CHINA ASSAULTS WORKERS WORLDWIDE • 20

CURTIS WHITE ON WHERE WE ARE HEADING • 32

BOUGHT & PAID FOR



\$2.95 USA \$4.50 CANADA



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Contents

Volume 28 · Number 11

Bought & Paid For: Bush/Cheney '04

By Craig Aaron

16 Who is behind the president's fundraising scheme—and what they expect in return.

The China Syndrome By David Moberg

20 China's repression of its laborers affects workers around the world.

No 'Choice' By Glen Ford and Peter Gamble

22 Wal-Mart attempts to smother public schools under a mountain of money.

Cover by Jim Rinnert

11 House Call By Barbara Lee (D.-Calif.)

Demanding transparency from Bush's "independent" WMD commission.

12 Power Pop By Ana Marie Cox

Right-wing hipsters and Repunklicans: It's the death of the cool.

13 The Third Coast By Salim Muwakkil

Barack Obama's primary colors were shades of 1983.

14 The First Stone

By Joel Bleifuss

A man, a plan, a cabal: Leo Strauss, the invasion of Iraq and the Office of Special Plans.



6 Strange Motives By Neve Gordon

What was the logic behind Israel's assassination of the founder and spiritual leader of Hamas?

8 Meltdown Madness By Heather Wokusch

The Bush administration eases restrictions on an apocalyptic industry.

8 Cola Wars By Mischa Gaus

Colombia union workers on hunger strike are battling Coke and right-wing paramilitaries.

9 Appallo-O-Meter By Dave Mulcahey

10 In Person By Frida Berrigan

Ex-Pentagon insider Karen Kwiatkowski declares war on embedded neoconservatives.

24 · The Price is Wrong By Jeff Shaw

BOOKS Cost-benefit analysis tells us the price of everything, but the value of nothing.

26 · Life During Wartime By Todd Lillithun

MOVIES Small Israeli film manages to fly high on *Broken Wings*.

27 · The Weathered Men By James Parker

MOVIES New documentary shows what became of the MC5.

28 · Punk the Vote By Don Thrasher

MUSIC Punk rockers of the world, unite (to throw Bush out on his ass)!

32 · Nowhere Men By Curtis White

BACKPAGE George W.S. Trow can tell us where we are heading, but who will listen?

“I find it outrageous that the president is running for reelection on the grounds that he’s done such great things about terrorism. He ignored it. He ignored it for months, when maybe we could have done something to stop 9/11.”

RICHARD CLARKE
60 MINUTES, MARCH 21, 2004



Editorial

Halfway There By Cynthia Moothart

We’re not accustomed to giving President George W. Bush kudos for a job well done, but in one regard he’s exceeded all expectation: Junior has

succeeded in turning half the population solidly against him.

In the last three months, Bush’s approval ratings nationwide have dipped by 10 percentage points, and a recent study by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press shows that internationally he’s viewed with similar disdain.

His crotch-grabbing conduct in the war on terror and the invasion of Iraq has made the United States a global pariah, but it’s his cold indifference to facts on the ground that have cost him at home.

Take the economy.

Addressing voters recently in Ohio, a state brutalized by the last three years, Bush said the 6.2 percent unemployed Buckeyes are going through a “transition.” And promoting job retraining without offering a program, he added, “If you become a more productive citizen, you’ll make more money.”

But the real kicker came when he insisted that Americans are better off as a result of his intervention: “Our economy is expanding, productivity is strong, unemployment has been falling, incomes are rising—and we’re going to stay on this path of growth and prosperity in this country.”

Consider these facts:

- The workforce has lost more than 3 million jobs since he took office in 2000.
- The unemployment rate in January reached 5.6 percent.
- In February nearly 400,000 Americans gave up looking for work.
- The trade deficit in March showed another monthly high of \$43.1 billion.
- The number of uninsured Americans during his tenure rose to 43.6 million and increasingly those with coverage are paying more to keep it.

Against this preponderance of evidence, Bush’s absurd insistence that the United States is on the right track suggests economic policy has become the latest of his faith-based initiatives. And recalls James Carville’s famous quip from Daddy’s only term: “It’s the economy, stupid.”

But the Bushes suffer less from idiocy than a rarefied privilege that owes no relation to shared human reality. And where this detachment once resulted in head-scratching incredulity—recall George I honestly marveling at scanners even then commonly found in grocery stores—Junior’s is rightfully viewed with contempt.

Central themes of this presidency have been sacrifice and service to national

interests: rebuilding the economy, ridding the world of evil and bringing the light of democracy to darkened lands. And working men and women, soldiers and the elderly willingly pitched in, even as it became blindingly apparent that not all are expected to contribute equally.

While sending American soldiers to their deaths Bush defended a military record limited to combative stints at the barber and the dentist in the Alabama DMZ.

Next he sought to profit from images of 9/11 in his first round of television ads, a callous move immediately denounced by victims’ families, friends and colleagues. Now come revelations by longtime presidential advisor Richard Clarke that intransigence and disregard of facts contributed to the tragedy that day.

All the while, his corporate supporters profited from tax cuts, war contracts and legislative subsidies—and the resulting kickbacks to Bush/Cheney ’04 have made the campaign the largest payola scam in history. (See “Bought and Paid For” on Page 16.)

For three years this plutocrat masqueraded as an ordinary guy and got away with it because terrorism, war and a failing economy loomed so large as to overwhelm anyone in office.

But as the other 50 percent see these forces for what they are—successful policies crafted to consolidate the wealth and power of an economic elite—voters will take Bush at his word. And come November they will “bring it on.” ■

Letters



Non Nader-Haters

The question should be are the Democrats totally crazy ("Is He Totally Crazy?," March 29)? Ralph Nader, egomaniac, defiantly and with unmitigated effrontery, entered the presidential race despite being warned off by Democrats. The histrionic tantrum from Democrats as evidenced by public begging, pleading, whining and appealing to Nader's common sense not to run before Nader's official announcement was a disgrace. It exemplified a high disregard for democratic principals, and the tone of bullying and cowardice was shameful and embarrassing. The tantrum failed in its desired result and here comes the onslaught of ruthless character assassination that has worked so suc-

cessfully for Republicans. When the issues become uncomfortable, attacking character is an easy and effortless way to divert attention from the truth that our democracy is in crisis. By publicly begging and pleading for Nader not to run, the Democrats couldn't have more dramatically pointed out just how deep the crisis is. Democrats should analyze the nuance of cowardice they are projecting. Protesting competition suggests Democrats are afraid. My support is going to Nader, who has the courage to face competition against the odds and who has the integrity, experience, and conviction to save this country from a two-party system that is serving corporate America

at the expense of democracy, freedom, human rights and our environment.

*Debbie George
Columbia, SC*

Your picture of Nader making a point reminded me of the DLC's smear of Dean in order to make him appear too angry to be a viable candidate. And I am not a Dean fan.

As Nader has tried to make clear, the hope of turning America around from a corporate-dominated nation to a people-oriented nation will never happen if elected Democrats are content to pander to corporate money to ensure their congressional longevity. What positive future is there in electing a Bill Clinton look-alike (Kerry) and spending another four to eight years whining about the big, bad corporations?

So in spite of Joel Bleifuss and my wife, I'm voting for Nader.

*Stewart MacMillan
Guffin Bay, NY*

public utilities. Despite several disastrous missteps in New Orleans, Atlanta and Stockton, these corporate water mongers are relentlessly marching forward with their mantra of efficiency and cost savings.

Private water companies are lobbying budget-strapped local governments to privatize locally controlled, public water systems. Snookered by empty promises, mayors and city council members are taking the bait. But beware: Cities that embark on the path of handing their water systems over to corporate management can find themselves on a slippery slope of hidden costs long before a contract is ever in place. Cities should be wary, especially in the face of severe budget problems, because the personnel, legal and administrative costs involved in privatizing a municipal water utility can balloon far beyond predictions.

Water is a critical resource that must remain in the public trust. If the water giants have their way by turning water into a marketable commodity, citizens will eventually pay the high price tag.

*Wenonah Hauter
Director, Public Citizen's
Water-For-All Campaign
Washington, D.C.*

Population Problem

While nearly 750,000 Sierra Club members wait for their ballots to arrive by mail, media across the nation run juicy scandal stories about this year's board election ("Hostile Takeover," March 29). Sadly, most have opted for sensationalism rather than substantive discussion of the divisive issues plaguing this contentious election.

Virtually every problem fac-

www.inthesetimes.com

DISCUSSION

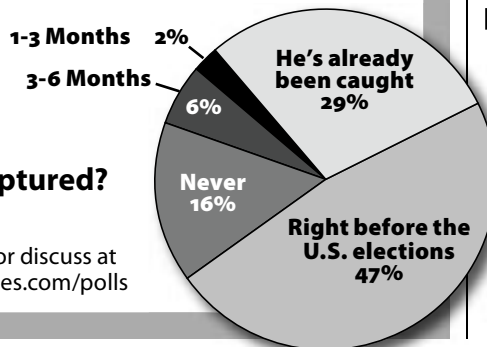
"I can't believe that some people really believe immigration control is the way to protect the environment. Globally, population growth is a problem for the environment, and we should try to promote women's health and family planning. However, if we limit immigration to the U.S., we're not helping stop population growth—we're just trying to stop population growth in the United States."

Join the debate at the forum for "Hostile Takeover."

POLL

MOST RECENT
When will
Osama bin
Laden be captured?

Cast your vote or discuss at
www.inthesetimes.com/polls



Not a Drop to Drink

Regarding David Moberg's article ("Plunder and Profit," March 29), after a series of failed experiments in countries such as Bolivia, Argentina and the Philippines, multinational water giants are now eyeing the United States, where 85 percent of its citizens receive their water from

ing this country is made worse by uncontrolled population growth: air and water pollution, habitat and species loss, housing shortages and sprawl, traffic congestion, overcrowded schools, waste disposal, energy consumption, loss of agricultural land, etc.

The Sierra Club—I should mention here that I'm a Life Member—is quite willing to talk about the numerous ways in which overpopulation impacts our environment. What they won't discuss is the way massive immigration impacts overpopulation. A little like trying to reduce unplanned pregnancies without mentioning birth control.

In 1969, the Sierra Club urged Americans to limit our population "in order to achieve balance between population and resources; and to achieve a stable population no later than the year 1990." A year later, on the very first Earth Day, the club vowed to support policy "that will bring about the stabilization of the population first in the United States and then of the world."

In 1970 our population was 203 million; today it approaches 300 million. What happened?

Immigration happened.

This issue is not about race. It's about too many people. Period.

Shawn M. Flynn
Director
Californians For Population
Stabilization (CAPS)
Santa Barbara, CA

Follow up: Salvadoran Elections

Last issue, Paul Brohaugh reported on the El Salvadoran right wing's smear tactics in their presidential campaign.

ARENA, El Salvador's right-wing party in power since 1989, won 57 percent of the vote in the March 21 elections, making Tony Saca the next president.

It was a disappointing result for the leftist FMLN (Frente Farabundo Marti Para La Liberacion Nacional) and its candidate, Schafik Handal. With local victories in 2003 and an alliance with the rapidly growing social movement, the FMLN was optimistic about its chances in nationwide elections this year.

ARENA, aware of its vulnerability, engaged in what many call the dirtiest campaign in El Salvador's history: Violence against FMLN leaders and supporters and a propaganda war waged by right-wing media, including radio stations owned by Saca, created widespread fear. But perhaps most effective in deterring FMLN votes were ARENA's claims that U.S. congressmen had threatened to deport Salvadoran immigrants if the FMLN won—ending the \$2 billion they send home each year.

Reports of voter irregularities were widespread. In San Miguel, for instance, a former well-known death squad informant was an election official, and international observers witnessed ARENA officials handing out multiple voter identification cards and stacks of money. During the count, one observer noted a handful of ballots folded together and stuffed into the box as one.

—Jesse Werthman

We in the House

Thanks for the new "House Call" column and kudos to Congressman Sanders for "How a Bad Bill Becomes a Law" (March 29). As a resident of a neighboring state, I often have the pleasure of hearing the gentleman from Vermont on my local radio. This column is long overdue. The House is

supposed to be our most democratic branch, and we need serious reforms, including Clean Elections public financing, fair and independent redistricting, and proportional representation. Hopefully "House Call" will help redress these lacks.

Matt Corsaro
New Paltz, NY

HOW TO REACH US

POST In These Times
2040 North Milwaukee Avenue
Chicago, IL 60647

PHONE (773) 772-0100

SUBSCRIPTION QUESTIONS

To renew your subscription or change your address, please call 1-800-827-0270.

SUBMISSIONS

Writers may submit articles (no attachments) to submissions@inthesetimes.com.

com. Please review the writer's guidelines posted on our Web site.

SPECIAL REQUESTS

To inquire about lost or damaged issues, back issues and classroom subscriptions, please contact Aaron Sarver at sarver@inthesetimes.com.

ADVERTISING

To advertise or to request a media kit, please contact Emily Udell at extension 240.

IN THESE TIMES

"With liberty and justice for all..."

FOUNDING EDITOR AND PUBLISHER
James Weinstein

EDITOR Joel Bleifuss

SENIOR EDITORS Craig Aaron, Patricia

Aufderheide, David Moberg, Salim Muwakkil

MANAGING EDITOR, LOGISTICS Jessica Clark

MANAGING EDITOR, CONTENT Cynthia Moothart

EDITOR-AT-LARGE Sheryl Larson

ASSISTANT EDITOR Brian Cook

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS Terry J. Allen, Eleanor J.

Bader, Bill Boisvert, Darryl Cater, Ana Marie Cox,

Susan J. Douglas, Barbara Ehrenreich, Annette

Fuentes, Juan Gonzalez, Miles Harvey, Paul

Hockenros, George Hodak, Doug Ireland, Naomi

Klein, Robert W. McChesney, Dave Mulcahey,

John Nichols, James North, Geov Parrish, Kim

Phillips-Fein, Jeffrey St. Clair, Jane Slaughter, Fred

Weir, G. Pascal Zachary, Slavoj Žižek

PROOFREADERS Alan Kimmel, Norman Wishner

INTERNS Nathan Cann, Phoebe Connelly, Nicholas

Halverson, Ana Hristova, Daniel Hughes, Erin

Mosely, Melissa Pavolka, Jessica White

ART DIRECTOR Jim Rinnert

ASSOCIATE ART DIRECTOR Seamus Holman

ILLUSTRATOR Terry LaBan

PUBLISHER Jeff Epton

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHERS Aaron Sarver,

Tracy Van Slyke

ASSISTANT PUBLISHER A.L. Loy

CIRCULATION DIRECTOR Peter Hoyt

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR Emily Udell

IN THESE TIMES PUBLISHING CONSORTIUM

Grant Albert, Theresa Alt, Stuart Anderson,

R. Brent Fisher, Collier Hands, Polly Howells

and Eric Werthman, Nancy Kricorian and James

Schamus, Lisa Lee, Chris Lloyd, Robin Lloyd, Edith

Helen Monsees, Dave Rathke, Abby Rockefeller

and Lee Halprin, Perry Rosenstein, Lewis Steel,

Dan Terkel, Studs Terkel, James Weinstein

BOARD OF DIRECTORS Joel Bleifuss, Rose

Economou, Jeff Epton, Janet Geovanis, Robert

McChesney, David Moberg, Jean Pogge, Dave

Rathke, Beth Schulman

In These Times (ISSN 0160-5902) is published biweekly by the Institute for Public Affairs, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647. Periodicals postage paid at Chicago, IL and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to In These Times, 308 E. Hitt St., Mt. Morris, IL 61054. This issue (Vol. 28, No. 11) went to press on March 26 for newsstand sales April 9 to April 23, 2004.

The entire contents of *In These Times* are copyright ©2004 by the Institute for Public Affairs, and may not be reproduced in any manner, either in whole or in part, without permission of the publisher. Copies of *In These Times* contract with the National Writers Union are available upon request. Contact the union at (212) 254-0279 or <http://www.nwu.org>.

Subscriptions are \$36.95 a year (\$59 for institutions; \$61.95 Canada; \$75.95 overseas). For subscription questions, address changes and back issues call (800) 827-0270.

Complete issues and volumes of *In These Times* are available from Bell and Howell, Ann Arbor, MI. *In These Times* is indexed in the Alternative Press Index and the Left Index. Newsstand circulation through Big Top Newsstand Services, a division of the IPA, at (415) 643-0161, or info@bigtoppubs.com.

Printed in the United States.





Sheikh Ahmad Yassin's funeral was a heavy display of Hamas artillery.

Strange Motives

What was the logic behind Israel's assassination of the founder and spiritual leader of Hamas? By Neve Gordon

JERUSALEM—A DAY AFTER HAMAS FOUNDER AND spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmad Yassin was assassinated, the former director of Israel's intelligence agency stated that the terrorist threat would certainly increase. Indeed, as protests and riots erupted across the Occupied Territories and the Arab world, Israel went on high alert.

Ephraim Halevy, former director of Mossad, argued it would take a while before the situation would return to the level it had been before the assassination and that in the long run the threat was unlikely to decrease as a result of the extra-judicial execution.

The assassination, ordered March 22 by Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, was opposed by some top officials, including Avi Dichter, head of Israel's Shin Bet security service, because it was likely to lead

to revenge attacks.

Considering that Yassin's assassination will exacerbate the violence in the region and thus further endanger Israeli citizens, one might ask why the government authorized the operation.

Israeli commentator Oded Granot seems to have an answer.

A day after the assassination, he noted that Hamas and Fatah (the largest party within the Palestinian Authority) were on the verge of reaching a cooperation agreement regarding the distribution of authority in the Gaza Strip. The two major political factions in the Strip wanted to ensure that there would be no internal strife and that joint control would be assumed over the region if Sharon went ahead with his plan to dismantle Jewish settlements and withdraw Israel's troops.

Our Unpopular Culture

A year after President George W. Bush led the United States into war with Iraq, international public opinion about America and its foreign policy is growing increasingly negative, according to a new study by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press.

"A Year After Iraq: Mistrust of America in Europe Ever Higher, Muslim Anger Persists," includes surveys from eight countries and reveals pervasive anti-American sentiments in Pakistan, Jordan, Morocco and Turkey. In Jordan, for instance, almost seven in 10 believe American leaders lied about WMDs and three-quarters consider U.S. terrorism concerns to be exaggerated.

Favorable opinions of U.S. foreign policy also are dropping in many European countries; in Great Britain it fell to 58 percent, compared to 70 percent last May. Only 39 percent hold a positive view of Bush.

"The numbers keep getting worse and worse," says Andrew Kohut, director of the Pew Center.

French and German citizens hold particularly dim views of the president: Eighty-five percent of French citizens disapprove of Bush, placing him only eight points from Osama bin Laden; in Germany 85 percent disapprove of Bush and 96 percent bin Laden.

Many countries also believe the United States refused to reveal its true motives for invading Iraq. When asked what they believe the real reasons to be, high majorities in every country but the United States and Great Britain named control over Mideast oil. World domination, targeting unfriendly Muslim governments and protecting Israel also topped the list.

Reconstruction efforts suffer similarly low numbers. Fewer than 50 percent in every country polled, including the United States, credit America and its allies with doing a good job in post-war Iraq. In Turkey, Morocco and Pakistan, support is in the teens when asked if the effort is addressing the needs of Iraqi citizens.

To see the full report, go to www.people-press.org.

—Erin Mosely

Israeli officials, Granot added, feared that if such an agreement were signed then the Bush administration would veto all Hamas assassinations. Israel consequently decided not to take any chances and killed Yassin.

Even if Granot is right, the question regarding the Israeli government's objective still stands.

One explanation is based on the assumption that Sharon actually intends to withdraw from the Gaza Strip and that he killed Yassin in order to advance this end. This view is informed by three major hypotheses.

- Sharon does not want to replicate his predecessor's mistake. Unlike Israel's rapid withdrawal from southern Lebanon, which many conceived as an act of defeat and cowardice, Sharon wants to create the impression that Israel's withdrawal from Gaza is in no way a result of pressure applied by Hamas. Accordingly, the assassination is both a symbolic act and an attempt to weaken Hamas' infrastructure. One may accordingly expect that in the coming months the Israeli military will accelerate its operations in the Gaza Strip.
- Sharon hopes that Yassin's assassination will help him garner support within his own Likud party, because his popularity is waning and because many of his allies are against any withdrawal from Gaza. The execution of the Hamas leader demonstrates to Sharon's political partners that he is still "attuned to Israel's security needs and will not hesitate to use all the means necessary to ensure it." The new Sharon is still the old Sharon.
- According to this explanation the attack's objective was to create chaos in the Gaza Strip so that following the withdrawal internal strife between the Palestinian factions would erupt.

Those who think that Sharon authorized Yassin's assassination in order to abandon his withdrawal proposal also employ this last point. Sharon, according to this explanation, hopes to use the chaos he has engendered and the violent reaction that will surely follow as pretense for keeping Israeli troops and settlements in the Strip.

While only the future will tell which explanation is more accurate, Yassin's assassination has a number of direct effects.

It will certainly lead to a series of bloody attacks against targets within Israel and perhaps even abroad. While Hamas' ability to strike against Israelis has in no

way been jeopardized, the perpetrators' will to carry out attacks is surely much greater than it was before the execution.

The Islamic group had made veiled threats that it would retaliate against the United States for the assassination but, Abdel Aziz Rantisi, named as Hamas' new Gaza chief, said the militant group had no plans to attack U.S. targets, while another top official in the organization said it has targeted Sharon for death.

"We are inside Palestinian land and acting only inside Palestinian land. We are resisting the occupation, nothing else," Rantisi told reporters in Gaza. "Our resistance will continue just inside our border, here inside our country."

In addition, the assassination has widely broadened the frontiers of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by accentuating its religious dimension. Muslims from Jakarta to Cairo have vowed to avenge the cleric's death.

While these two effects have been mentioned in the media, commentators have ignored that the Israeli attack will likely deal a harsh blow to the recent emergence of a Palestinian nonviolent resistance movement. The three-and-a-half year Palestinian uprising, known as the second Intifada, began changing its character about two months ago: from a struggle based on violent resistance led by relatively small groups of militants to a massive nonviolent grassroots movement.

The impetus for this mobilization is the rapid erection of the separation wall. The protesters used the same techniques developed by Ghandi and Martin Luther King, with hundreds of demonstrators standing or lying in front of bulldozers, chanting songs and waving flags. Although the military has been ordered to disperse the protesters, using tear gas, clubs, and, at times, even bullets, every day in the past weeks more and more Palestinians (alongside a few Israelis and internationals) have joined the ranks. For a moment it appeared that the Palestinians had adopted a tenable strategy which could actually threaten Israel's occupation.

Yassin's assassination will probably weaken the nonviolent resistance and empower those who favor violent retaliation against Israel. Thus, ironically, Israel's operation has actually strengthened the legitimacy of Hamas' military wing. ■

NEVE GORDON teaches politics at Ben-Gurion University and can be reached at neve_gordon@yahoo.com.

Meltdown Madness

Easing regulations on an apocalyptic industry. *By Heather Wokusch*

PRESIDENT BUSH HAS ALWAYS BEEN a good friend to the nuclear industry, but his recent overtures should sound alarm bells.

The White House has begun pushing to replace governmental safety standards at federal nuclear facilities with requirements penned by contractors. As Rep. Ted Strickland (D-Ohio) quipped, "It's like the fox guarding the hen house."

What prompted the Bush administration's move? Congress insisted the government start fining contractors for violations.

The proposed weakening of safety standards would affect more than 100,000 nuclear plant workers and comes at an especially lousy time to lower their morale.

A strike by 276 operations and maintenance workers was narrowly averted in January at the Indian Point 3 plant, 35 miles north of midtown Manhattan. When the plant's owner proposed substituting manag-

ers for striking workers, union spokesman Steve Mangione observed, "Anyone would want the people who work there every day—not managers who take a crash course—to be the ones running the plant."

Happy, well-trained workers are key to nuclear safety: When problems occur, they often result from worker error. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) reported 728 worker-caused mishaps during a recent two-year period, an average of more than three mistakes per year at each plant.

Even worse, government security contractors have apparently been lax in monitoring worker effectiveness. The Y-12 nuclear weapons plant in Tennessee, for example, made headlines recently when it reported missing 200 keys to protected areas. Then news surfaced that security personnel guarding the nation's nuclear stockpiles, including tons of enriched uranium at the Y-12 nuclear weapons plant in Oak Ridge, Tenn., had

been cheating on their antiterrorism drills.

An Energy Department investigation discovered that contract security guards at the Y-12 plant had been given access to computer models of antiterrorism drill strikes in advance, rendering the tests useless. A representative from Wackenhut, the longtime government contractor charged with securing the facility, claimed security at Y-12 was "better than it's ever been" but few are convinced. A January 2002 study found only 19 percent of Wackenhut guards at Indian Point reported feeling able to "adequately defend the plant."

Almost 25 years ago, the reactor core meltdown at Three Mile Island struck fear into the nation, but consequences could have been much worse. A 1982 study by the Sandia National Laboratory predicted an accident at the Limerick nuclear plant outside Philadelphia could result in 74,000 people killed within the first year and a further 610,000 afflicted with radiation-related illnesses. Add to that \$200 billion in relocation and clean-up costs.

By all appearances, however, stateside nuclear facilities are functioning well. Pennsylvania's Susquehanna nuclear plant just announced an electricity-gen- ➤

Cola Wars

Striking unionists battle Coke and paramilitaries. *By Mischa Gaus*

PROTESTING A MASS FIR-ing of union leaders, 30 Coca-Cola workers in Colombia began a hunger strike March 15, which was met by death threats from paramilitaries known to have worked on the company's behalf in the past.

A group of 91 workers—nearly three-fourths union leaders—was dismissed in February after Coca-Cola closed several plants. Protesters say the company targets union shops, and the hunger strikers in eight Colombian cities demand reinstatement of the fired workers.

A group affiliated with the country's most notorious paramilitaries, the AUC, released a statement declaring war on the union leaders and

promising to "finish them all off" if they do not leave the country in three months.

Paramilitaries acting with at least tacit approval of Colombian Coca-Cola officials are suspected in the murder of seven Coca-Cola unionists in recent years and the kidnapping and torture of others. About 3,600 Colombian union members have been killed in the last two decades, most at the hands of right-wing paramilitaries.

Daily updates from the hunger strikers detail threatening phone calls, police harassment, government indifference and company disciplinary hearings for strikers.

SINALTRAINAL, the Colombian Coca-Cola union, says

500 workers have been forced into retirement since September by consolidation, and when 91 workers refused the lump-sum buyout, they were fired. The workers' collective bargaining agreement says they should be transferred, and even though a Colombian judge in January upheld that principle, the country's labor ministry ruled against the workers.

"The ministry gives mixed results depending upon who is in power," says Daniel Kovalik, counsel for the plaintiffs in a lawsuit against Coca-Cola filed in a Florida court on behalf of tortured and murdered union members. "Certainly, under the current [Colombian President Alvaro] Uribe administration, it is antagonistic toward the workers."

Coca-Cola called the hunger strike "unfortunate," saying it treated all employees fairly.

Anti-sweatshop student groups are pressuring their

administrations to request an investigation of the violence against Coca-Cola workers. One school—DePaul University in Chicago—has asked the Worker Rights Consortium, which monitors compliance with the codes of conduct that corporations sign with colleges, to step in.

Acting at the behest of its affiliate schools, the WRC has investigated apparel factories worldwide. An agency official said examining Coca-Cola would be a natural extension of the group's scope because some member schools have licensing contracts with the company.

"We see this as the same issue, just in a different industry," says Jon Rodney, a University of California-Berkeley anti-sweatshop activist. "The university's logo and image is tainted by this kind of exploitation and violence." ■

MISCHA GAUS writes on politics and culture for *In These Times*.

APPALL-O-METER

4.8 Back to You, Dubya

The House of Representatives set a grim precedent last year when Republican leaders held up the gavel for hours on the Medicare bill roll call until one last congressman could be browbeaten into switching his vote and securing its passage. It now appears that the Bush administration's irresistible powers of persuasion were exerted on another public servant to see the bill

through. As Congress debated the bill last November, according to the San Francisco Examiner, White House officials threatened Robert S. Foster, Medicare's chief actuary, with "severe" personal consequences if he failed to follow the party line on the new law's proposed costs. Foster charges that the administration knew that the new Medicare law would devour far more of the federal treasury than the \$400 billion that Bush claimed it would—perhaps as much as \$534 billion.

The administration's chicanery goes beyond suborning testimony before Congress. It has produced and distributed "video news releases" on the new Medicare law. VNRs, as they're called, are a standard tool of the PR business, the trick being to make the release look exactly like the evening news as the public sees it. News outlets may then be counted on, out of laziness or cheapness, to recycle the release as reporting. The Bush Medicare VNRs helpfully provide news anchors with scripts (which

appraise the law in glowing terms) and feature hired actors playing reporters (who are also surprisingly upbeat about the unpopular law). The best thing about the releases: they were funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Your tax dollars at work.

2.9 Evil Doers for Kerry?

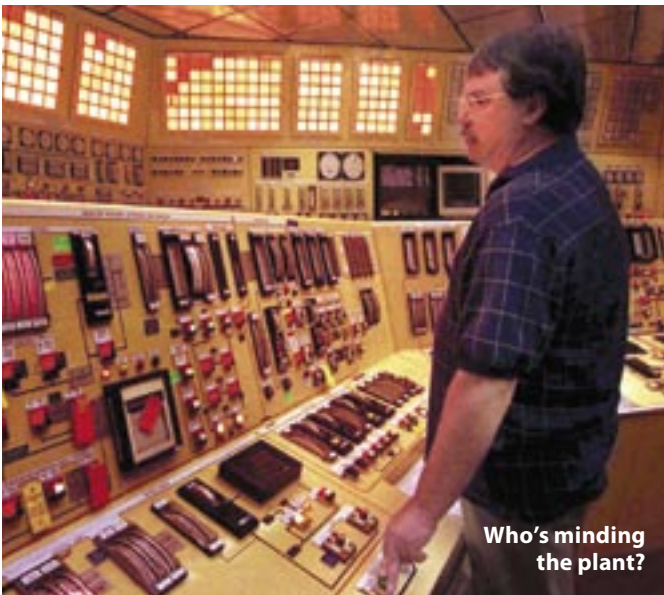
The people have spoken: John Kerry is the favorite candidate of the global terrorist com-

munity. That's the exalted judgment of the American public, as reported in the *Washington Times*. In a poll conducted by Andres McKenna Research, 60 percent of respondents named the Massachusetts senator in answer

to the question, "Who do you think the terrorists would prefer to have as president?" Only 25 percent chose Dubya.

True, the *Times* is owned by a Republican-friendly cult and operated by wingnuts who are creepy even by DC standards. And, sure, Gary Andres and Michael McKenna, the principals of the firm that conducted the poll, are longtime GOP political hacks. But you know it's true. Just read between the lines of the communique Al Qaeda issued after the Madrid bombing, explaining its endorsement of Bush. "Kerry will kill our nation while it sleeps because he and the Democrats have the cunning to embellish blasphemy and present it to the Arab and Muslim nation as civilization." Cunning? Blasphemy embellishment skills? The Democrats? Come now, Osama, we don't believe everything we hear on Fox.

—Dave Mulcahey



Who's minding the plant?

MICHAEL WILLIAMS / GETTY IMAGES

eration record for 2003, which it attributes to "maintaining the highest safety and reliability standards," and Maryland's Calvert Cliffs Nuclear Power Plant (CCNPP) is hard at work assuring the public it's a friendly neighbor; the CCNPP Web site includes references to its "forest management and wildlife protection."

But the CCNPP site also lists protective measures to be taken in case of an accident, such as "put uncovered food into the refrigerator" and "washing yourself and your clothes removes radioactive material you may have picked up."

How effective these steps would be in a meltdown is debatable—perhaps similar to clasp seatbelts tight when an airplane is nose-diving. One factor is clear: CCNPP's location (60 miles from Baltimore and 50 miles from Washington, D.C.) might make it a target for terror. Other reactors across the country could be similarly at risk.

Regardless, the Bush administration has been pumping money into the nuclear industry, including a fresh \$35 million infusion last year to build 50 new U.S. reactors by 2020. Given each reactor costs more than \$1.5 billion to produce, and the public assumes liability in case of an accident or attack, U.S. taxpayers should be forewarned.

The White House also is leaning on the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to weaken regulations regarding nuclear waste transport and storage.

How ironic that alternative energy sources receive relatively little in government subsidies, especially in light of new satellite mapping techniques showing that the Great Plains region could generate three times as much energy in wind-power as the United States consumes.

What then explains our government's obsession with nuclear power?

Follow the money. Nuclear plant PACs invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in the Bush-Cheney presidential campaign, and almost half a million dollars in the 23 members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee in 2002 alone.

That's no excuse for poor energy policy. The risks of nuclear plants must be considered before dumping any more money into this losing game. And as long as the nation's 100-plus nuclear plants continue to operate, the toughest of safety standards must be enforced. ■

HEATHER WOKUSCH writes on WMDs and nuclear issues.



Last March, as U.S. troops were preparing to launch the invasion of Iraq, a much quieter war was taking place inside the Pentagon. Karen Kwiatkowski, a lifelong conservative and career military official, was knocking heads with what she called "the neoconservative coup, the hijacking of the Pentagon." Kwiatkowski recently wrote of the war and occupation in Iraq and what she calls the Bush Doctrine Experiment: "Costs have been high, payoffs unclear and there is no exit strategy in sight."

Can you describe the Bush Doctrine as you saw it operating within the Pentagon?

The doctrine as presented in the National Security Strategy is an offshoot of the Project for a New American Century's "Rebuilding America's Defenses." The NSS includes the idea of preemptive war as a policy instead of an emergency response and invalidates the idea of international law.

The Doctrine is about the U.S. as global hegemon, militarily and economically. This attitude is reflected in

Arabia)—if these are assessed, then it is succeeding marvelously. In fact, a civil war and other strife in Iraq will sap national energies that a stable democracy might have developed to ask us to remove our forces and hand over the bases we have already built there.

Is there a "course correction" that can happen?

Pulling back and reducing our footprint in Iraq is possible and doable. Instead of an announced plan to keep 80,000 to 100,000 troops in Iraq indefinitely, we should announce and implement a more drastic reduction to less than 10,000 troops, and simultaneously accelerate the self-government of Iraq. To correct the wrongs done already in Iraq, contracts awarded to members of the U.S.-appointed governing council and their extended families should be invalidated and an open public bidding process initiated to ensure that we have not created a new secular Shia elite led by Ahmad Chalabi in Iraq to take the place of the secular Sunni elite of the Baath Party. These are practical steps. The overall course correction is characterized simply as giving them their country back.

Can you describe the moment you knew the Pentagon was no longer your home?

The moment in August 2002 when I had written five anti-neoconservative essays to help ease my own angst about what I had seen going on around me, and I realized that my views had made me an internal "enemy" of the policymakers. It dawned on me that

my allies would be those outside the Pentagon who cared about the directions we were going.

My politics did not change, but I did switch parties. The Republican Party I grew up in had evolved from the small government, states' rights and Bill of Rights party into something that was really the opposite—federal centralization and growth, big spending domestically and interference with others abroad.

Do you see opportunities for progressives and conservatives to collaborate on "regime change" at home?

Absolutely. Progressives and traditional conservatives share a respect for the individual over the state, and they share a love of the freedom of thought and action that made this country the great place it has been. Both have been appalled at the restriction in civil liberties, including infringements on free speech and the right to defend oneself in speech and action against government interference. Both love the Constitution, in contrast to the neoconservatives and the current administration. ■

To read Frida Berrigan's complete interview with Karen Kwiatkowski, go to www.inthesetimes.com.



Outside the Inside

By Frida Berrigan

the desire to expand the military to control global territory, global resources like oil and gas, and space as well. The attitude that we are the dominator, all others are either working for us or else are in our way, is well reflected in the Pentagon, specifically among Bush appointees. Andrew Marshall, a neocon-friendly strategist in the Pentagon, has been working on global military placement issues for a long time to prevent the ascendance of any competitor for the United States in the next 30 years. It is serious business for the policymakers, even though it is not shared publicly.

What are U.S. aims in Iraq? Are they being achieved?

If the public rhetoric about giving democracy to the Iraqis is the basic reason for the occupation is true, then it is not working that way. But if the real reasons for the occupation—increasing and solidifying a military-basing structure and force-projection footprint around key oil and gas regions and within areas where threats to U.S. (and Israeli) interests lie (like Iran, Syria, Saudi



Transparency Now

AFTER MONTHS OF REFUSING TO ADMIT THAT his administration may be guilty of misleading the American people on the rationale for going to war in Iraq, President Bush finally acknowledged in February the need for an “independent” commission to consider the possible misuse of American intelligence. The use of this “intelligence” led us into a conflict in which more than 560 Americans have been killed and more than 3,000 have been wounded, along with untold numbers of Iraqis and noncombatants.

The decision to name the Commission on the Investigation of U.S. Intelligence on Weapons of Mass Destruction was long overdue. Congress, the American people and especially our troops expect credible and thorough answers into how and why our nation went to war and how and why only the intelligence that supposedly supported the case was used by the administration while contrary evidence was ignored.

Yet with the president as the sole authority in the creation of the commission, we now have a group independent only in name. The president has abandoned true impartiality by dictating its agenda. Republicans will say that there are Democrats on the WMD commission, and that’s true, but the key point is that these are Democrats President Bush has chosen.

There were other options. A bill by Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.), H.R. 2625, would have created a truly independent commission appointed by Congressional Republicans and Democrats.

President Bush gave the commission an exceedingly broad mandate, including a review of threats concerning Iraq, North Korea, Iran, Libya and Afghanistan. Effectively, the president watered down a focus on the WMD intelligence related to Iraq—and in assigning the commission a March 2005 reporting deadline, he also ensured its report will not impact the November elections.

To voice our concerns about this plan, 33 progressive members of Congress joined me in writing the Commission’s newly appointed co-chairs, Judge Laurence Silberman and former Senator Charles Robb (D-Va.). We wrote: “We strongly believe that this commission should have been appointed through a bipartisan process, with the full and equal participation of the leadership of both parties, rather than through the sole authority of the administration itself. We regard this appointing authority and the power to set the agenda of the commission as particularly important since questions about the use of intelligence prior to the war in Iraq rise to the very high-

est levels of the administration itself.”

We also pushed for a more focused mandate: “Our nation went to war with Iraq in the spring of 2003 after this president and other members of his administration repeatedly told Congress and the American people in absolutely no uncertain terms that our country faced a grave and imminent threat from Iraq and its vast stores of weapons of mass destruction.”

Finally, we reminded the president’s appointees that time is of the essence because for this year’s elections the American people needed the opportunity to reach their own conclusions. “We regret that your commission was not formed months ago,” we wrote. “If it had been, you would no doubt be well on your way to completing your report. However, such was not the case, and the deadline the president has set before you is to complete your mission by March 31, 2005. We believe that there must be a public accounting of these questions well before that date, and we call on your body to issue an interim report within six months and to complete your work on these questions by the end of this calendar year.”

We also insisted that the commission address questions about the role key officials played in evaluating or shaping intelligence interpretations, including the vice president, the secretaries of State and Defense, and the director of the Central Intelligence Agency. We wanted to know how and why nuance, ambivalence and qualification disappeared from administration communications to the public and members of Congress regarding the suspected presence of and threat posed by Iraqi WMD. And why intelligence, which often resides in shades of gray, was presented in such stark black and white terms.

Surprisingly, the response came back quickly, but its speed was in inverse to its results. Silberman and Robb repeatedly fell back on Executive Order 13328, which created the commission, as not having the scope to address our questions. They did agree that the commission should “complete its work in a timely fashion,” but they claimed that the March deadline was not too far out but possibly too “ambitious.” Furthermore, they argued that their findings should be deliberately kept out of the political debate. We could not disagree more.

Clearly, this commission is not likely to address the real questions related to WMD intelligence. The American people deserve real answers about why this nation went to war with Iraq. They deserve these answers and they must receive them. The fate of our nation as a transparent society depends on such a clear accounting. This commission—Bush’s commission—will not provide that. ■

We wanted to know why intelligence, which often resides in shades of gray, was presented in such stark black and white terms.

REP. BARBARA LEE is a member of the Progressive Caucus and represents California’s 9th District.



Power Pop *By Ana Marie Cox*

Death of the Cool

These articles about “cool” conservatives betray the intractable sentimentality of many mainstream journalists, who clearly can’t imagine a youth that isn’t about not trusting people over 30.

IT’S A SLOW NEWS SEASON. THE ELECTION IS SEVEN months away, summer has yet to bestow its blockbusters and the possibility that John Kerry will do something as exciting as have an affair with an intern are as slim as the chances he’ll name John McCain his running-mate. It is at times like these that a feature writer’s thoughts turn to a time-honored trend story: The possibility that not all Republicans dress like Jehovah’s Witnesses and sound like George Will.

Articles that purport to have discovered some strain of “cool” conservative—or that proclaim that “conservatism is cool”—appear all over the mainstream press, from the *San Francisco Chronicle* to Patrick Buchanan’s magazine, *The American Conservative*. But The *New York Times*’ word processing program must have some kind macro for them—in the past year alone, three front-page stories have informed readers of the *Times* that the conservative movement in America is not a Borg-like monolith made up of cloned Christian Coalition members. Last May, in a *Times Magazine* cover story on “Hipublicans,” we learned that a college student who looked like she “could have stepped out of a 1970’s campus sit-in,” with “shoulder-length blond hair, faded jeans and rock T-shirt,” also could be “one of the most combative and hard-core conservatives” on her campus.

This astonishing proposition—that a young person’s appearance was not necessarily indicative of political ideology—apparently merited further investigation, for September 2003 brought another shocking expose, this on the front page of the *Times*’ Sunday Style section: The editors of New York’s *Vice* magazine, which “nails hipster culture on the head,” also supported the invasion of Iraq and adore George W. Bush. What? Didn’t these hipsters get their voting instructions when they picked up their trucker hats? Conservative young people who dress cool? The cognitive dissonance is making my head hurt!

The latest entry in the *Times*’ attempt to grapple with post-adolescents who refuse to conform to a Boomer stereotype also appeared on the front page of Sunday Styles on March 21. The story’s thesis was laid out in the first paragraph:

With his mohawk, ratty fatigues, assorted chains and his menagerie of tattoos—swallows on each shoulder, a nautical star on his back and the logo of the Bouncing Souls, a New York City punk band, on his right leg—22-year-old Nick Rizzuto is the very picture of counterculture alienation. But ... Mr. Rizzuto is adamantly in favor

of lowering taxes and for school vouchers, and against campaign finance laws; his favorite Supreme Court justice is Clarence Thomas; he plans to vote for President Bush in November; and he’s hard-core into capitalism.

Can you feel your mind being blown yet?

These articles betray the intractable Boomer sentimentality of many mainstream journalists, who clearly can’t imagine a youth that isn’t about not trusting people over 30. Close examination shows there are really two threads of culture under the *Times*’ blurry microscope. First, there are the young conservatives who are not total freaks: The Hipublicans. Or maybe they dress like freaks but also are conservative: The Repunklicans. Those folks over at *Vice* magazine, along with a certain strain of right-wing punkhood, namely, skinheads, actually represent the inverse of a conservatism somehow becoming “cool”—these groups show how easily a hipster attitude can be exaggerated into conservatism.

What is “cool,” after all? We’re not talking about bohemianism or the avant-garde, but cool. The popular people in high school cool, the pages of the *Times* Sunday Style section cool. That sort of cool is about elitism, conformity, cliquishness and a dislike of those who are not like you. Hipster attitude can become right-wing jingoism by simply becoming more extreme. True, *Vice* magazine’s editors probably think of skinheads as being passé, but *Vice* editor Gavin McInnes’ ironic racism and in-your-face nationalism echo the sentiments of young white supremacists everywhere: “I love being white and I think it’s something to be very proud of,” he told the *Times*. “I don’t want our culture diluted. We need to close the borders now and let everyone assimilate to a Western, white, English-speaking way of life.”

This is a disturbing sentiment, of course. But it is all the more disturbing for being a part of a story featured in the puffiest, fluffiest section of an already lifestyle-driven Sunday newspaper. Think about it: Racism is bad, but racism treated as a trend piece, next to features about hot new bistros and nifty trinkets? It suggests that this offensive worldview can be put on and cast off like last year’s sneakers, or played for effect, like the most obscene new album. This juxtaposition points to how all stories about “cool conservatives”—no matter what thread they examine—fail us: Honest political beliefs are the opposite of trends. They are sincere, thought-out and deeply held. And if they’re wrong or offensive, they should be argued against, not simply declared out of style. ■

ANA MARIE COX
is the editor of
Wonkette! (www.wonkette.com) and
writes for a variety
of publications on
culture, politics and
conservatives’ foibles.



Shades of 1983

AS I SURVEYED THE THrong GATHERED MARCH 16 in Chicago's Hyatt Hotel to celebrate the primary victory of Illinois State Senator Barack Obama I experienced a sense of déjà vu. In 1983, I had stood among a similar crowd when Harold Washington won Chicago's mayoral primary. Both crowds were celebrating the victory of a black candidate who began the campaign as a prohibitive underdog. But the most striking feature of both events, and the primary reason for my feelings of déjà vu, was the crowd's racial diversity.

It wasn't diversity cobbled together by good intentions. This was people coming together with shared concerns and hopes—a genuine coalition. Illinois residents of all ethnicities seem to trust that Obama will speak to their specific issues without bias. It is a kind of trust that Washington also inspired.

Obama won a stunning victory. In a field of seven, the 42-year-old state senator captured more than 52 percent of the vote. His closest competitor, State Comptroller Dan Hynes, polled less than 24 percent. The third finisher, Blair Hull, won 10 percent of the vote. Hull had been leading the field after spending \$29 million of his own money on the race, but his campaign ran aground after divorce records revealed an incident of domestic violence.

Obama's triumph catapulted him into the national limelight, and he has become the newest rising star in the Democrats' firmament. The Harvard Law School graduate and University of Chicago lecturer is favored to win the Senate seat now held by retiring Republican Peter Fitzgerald. The son of a black Kenyan father and a white Kansan mother, Obama embodies our multicultural zeitgeist and would be just the third African American elected to the U.S. Senate since Reconstruction. The second was Carol Moseley Braun, also from Illinois.

Obama is favored to win in November. Illinois is leaning increasingly Democratic, and he demonstrated widespread appeal in the primary contest. Not only did he win Chicago and Cook County, where minority voters dominate, but he did surprisingly well in the predominately white "collar counties."

But the election won't be a cakewalk. Obama's Republican opponent is Jack Ryan, a fellow Harvard graduate and novice politician, who defeated seven candidates to win the GOP primary. Ryan is a multi-millionaire investment banker who quit his corporate

job to teach in an inner-city high school.

The 44-year-old Ryan is an attractive candidate with a compelling personal story. But, pundits say, his moderate credentials don't offer Republican voters much of a contrast with Obama, and he fails to excite the GOP base. What's more, like Hull, his divorce records have been an ongoing source of controversy.

Obama's candidacy took a while to catch on in the African-American community, but his popularity is growing fast. His campaign is being watched closely for what it may augur. Black candidates running in statewide elections traditionally face the dilemma of how to remain relevant to their base of support

without alienating other voters: The black electorate demands their candidates push the same policies that turn off white voters needed to win. For a black candidate to win a statewide office requires that they maintain an exquisite political balance.

Some analysts argue that to win votes among the general electorate these new-school black candidates must move beyond racial grievance and civil rights modalities. Several black politicians have adopted this model, including Reps. Har-

old Ford Jr. (D-Tenn.) and Gregory W. Meeks (D-N.Y.). Cory Booker, the Ivy League-educated candidate for mayor of Newark, N.J., also sought to embody this new-school mode in his unsuccessful run.

But many black voters are wary of such candidates and some initially withheld support for Obama because he was projected as such a post-race candidate. There even were rumors that he was cozying up to the Democratic Leadership Council.

But the candidate soon put those rumors to rest and—just as Harold Washington did 20 years earlier—mobilized significant support among Chicago's influential Black Nationalist community. For Chicago's African-American community, nationalist support generally confers political authenticity.

"I think it's fair to say that the conventional wisdom was we could not win," Obama told the packed hotel ballroom the night of his victory. "But we are here, from all across Illinois, suburbs, city, downstate, upstate, black, white, Hispanic, Asian."

He was right, and the crowd cheered exuberantly. Among the cheers, I swear I heard the chant, "Harold, Harold, Harold." ■



Barack Obama

Obama's crowd wasn't diversity cobbled together by good intentions. This was people coming together with shared concerns and hopes—a genuine coalition.

SALIM MUWAKKIL is a senior editor at *In These Times*, a contributing columnist to the *Chicago Tribune* and a *Crime and Communities Media Fellow* of the *Open Society Institute*.



The First Stone *By Joel Bleifuss*

A Man, a Plan, a Cabal

Political
theorist
Leo Strauss
believed the
people must
be deceived.
His acolytes
in the Office
of Special
Plans
couldn't
agree more.

WARS HAVE A WAY OF creating military heroes honored not for bravery on the battlefield but their willingness to follow their conscience and break ranks.

In 1971, Daniel Ellsberg leaked the Pentagon Papers, exposing the Vietnam War for the lie it was. One of today's heroes is Karen Kwiatkowski, a U.S. Air Force lieutenant colonel, who retired in July after more than 20 years of service. Her last detail was a 10-month tour at the Pentagon's Near East South Asia directorate. There she observed firsthand how the Office of Special Plans (OSP) formulated a "process of decision making for war not sanctioned by the Constitution we had all sworn to uphold." Kwiatkowski, formerly a speechwriter for the National Security Agency director, told that story on Salon.com on March 10. (See "In Person" on Page 10).

OSP was conceived days after September 11 by Paul Wolfowitz, deputy Secretary of Defense and a protégé of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. OSP's director was Abram Shulsky, who worked for Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle in the Reagan administration. Both Shulsky and Wolfowitz are Straussians, that is, followers of political philosopher Leo Strauss. He directed both their dissertations at the University of Chicago, and his teachings guide their actions. It was out of the Office of Special Plans that, in the best Straussian tradition, the war in Iraq was conceived, packaged, sold and delivered.

Kwiatkowski, explaining why she has "gone public" with her story, describes what she saw in this "well-appointed den of iniquity":

While the people were very much alive, I saw a dead philosophy—Cold War anti-communism and neo-imperialism—walking the corridors of the Pentagon. ... I witnessed neoconservative agenda bearers within OSP usurp measured and carefully considered assessments, and through suppression and distortion of intelligence analysis promulgate what were in fact falsehoods to both Congress and the executive office of the president. While this commandeering of a narrow segment of both intelligence production and America foreign policy matched closely with the well-published desires of the neoconservative wing of the Republican Party, many of us in the Pentagon—conservatives and liberals alike—felt that this agenda, whatever its flaws, or merits, had never been openly presented to the America people. Instead, the public story line was a fear-peddling and confusing set of messages, designed to take Congress and the country into a war of executive choice, a war based on false pretenses, and a war one year later Americans do not really understand.

Kwiatkowski provides an on-the-ground account of the OSP operations. The OSP, in effect, was a public relations outfit that produced "talking points on Iraq, WMD and terrorism." They were propagandistic in style," she writes, "and all desk officers were ordered to use them verbatim in the preparation of any material prepared for higher-ups and people outside the Pentagon."

She describes a staff meeting at which William "Wild Bill" Luti, the undersecretary of defense in charge of the OSP, called former Chief of Central Command Gen.

Anthony Zinni a "traitor" because he publicly expressed reservations about the war. Then there is David Schenker, a neoconservative political appointee, who told her "the best service Powell could offer would be to quit right now."

And she recounts how "the regard many of us had held for Colin Powell" dissipated on February 5, 2003, when he addressed the United Nations and "capitulated to the neo-conservative line" in a "speech not only filled with falsehoods pushed by the neoconservatives but also containing many statements already debunked by intelligence."

Yet Kwiatkowski's detailed account of how the neoconservatives in the OSP hijacked U.S. foreign policy is different from the Pentagon Papers in one respect: An embedded mainstream media are all but ignoring it.

The OSP got its special name from an administration that sought to hide its real purpose through linguistic subterfuge. Douglas Feith, undersecretary of defense for policy, to whom the OSP reports, explained to the BBC in July 2003, "We didn't think it was wise to create a brand new office and label it an office of Iraq policy."

Indeed, according to the *New York Times*' Ben Brantley, the OSP is a fiction. In a snide review of Tim Robbins' play *Embedded*, he writes that Robbins presents "a United States in which not only war but also the reporting of it is carefully engineered by an elitist Washington cabal. That cabal is the satanic power center in *Embedded*, a coven of policymakers called the Office of Special Plans."

His ignorance can be forgiven. The *New York Times* has cited OSP in only two news stories. And it

is not even mentioned in a *Times* essay by James Atlas that explores the influence of Leo Strauss, whose followers founded and staff the OSP. Atlas writes, "To intellectual-conspiracy theorists, the Bush administration's foreign policy is entirely a Straussian creation."

But to all accounts, the conspiracy is actual not theoretical. Strauss as a political philosopher and follower of Plato advocated the need for an all-knowing elite to conspire to guide public policy.

Shulsky, the OSP director, and Gary Schmitt, executive director of the Project for the New American Century, co-authored an article, "Leo Strauss and the World of Intelligence." They write that Strauss "alerts one to the possibility that political life may be closely linked to deception. Indeed, it suggests that deception is the norm in political life, and the hope, to say nothing of the expectation, of establishing a politics that can dispense with it is the exception."

Shadia Drury, a professor of political theory at the University of Regina in Saskatchewan, is the author of *The Political Ideas of Leo Strauss* and *Leo Strauss and the American Right*. Straussians both revere Drury for her understanding of his thought and revile "the bitch from Calgary" for letting that understanding see the light of day. "Nothing is more threatening to Strauss and his acolytes than the truth in general and the truth about Strauss in particular. His admirers are determined to conceal the truth about his ideas," she told Danny Postel in an interview (www.opendemocracy.net/debates/article-3-77-1542.jsp).

And with good reason, Straussians hold profoundly undemocratic views. "The ancient philosophers whom Strauss most cherished believed that the unwashed masses were not fit for either truth or liberty," she said. "Strauss was not as hostile to democracy as he was to liberalism. This is because he recognizes that the vulgar masses have numbers on their side, and the sheer power of numbers cannot be completely ignored. Whatever can



Donald Rumsfeld meets with two prominent Straussians, Under-Secretary of Defense Douglas Feith (RIGHT) and William "Wild Bill" Luti (SECOND FROM RIGHT).

DAVID HUME KENNERLY / GETTY IMAGES

be done to bring the masses along is legitimate. If you can use democracy to turn the masses against their own liberty, this is a great triumph. It is the sort of tactic that neoconservatives use consistently, and in some cases very successfully."

The various fictions about the need for a war in Iraq that emanated from OSP are a prime example of Straussians in action. "Leo Strauss was a great believer in the efficacy and usefulness of lies in politics," Drury said. "Public support for the Iraq war rested on lies about Iraq posing an imminent threat to the United States."

In *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, Strauss outlined why lies were necessary. "He argues that the wise must conceal their views for two reasons—to spare the people's feelings and to protect the elite from possible reprisals. The people will not be happy to learn that there is only one natural right—the right of the superior to rule over the inferior, the master over the slave, the husband over the wife, and the wise few over the vulgar many," she said.

William Kristol, editor of *The Weekly Standard* and a Straussian, dissembles when discussing

his philosophical mentor. "Strauss' kind of conservatism is public-spirited," he told Fox News. "He taught a great respect for politics and the pursuit of the common good." Note, however, that Kristol does not mention who determines what is in the "common good."

Drury will have none of this. "The idea that Strauss was a great defender of liberal democracy is laughable," she said. "I suppose that Strauss' disciples consider it a noble lie. Yet many in the media have been gullible enough to believe it."

At the hearings of the commission investigating 9/11, no one has highlighted the work of OSP, and no one in the mainstream media has raised that troubling omission.

In post-9/11 Washington, Drury sees the spirit of Strauss at work. "I never imagined when I wrote my first book on Strauss that the unscrupulous elite that he elevates would ever come so close to political power, nor that the ominous tyranny of the wise would ever come so close to being realized in the political life of a great nation like the United States. But fear is the greatest ally of tyranny." ■

BUSH CHENEY '04



BOUGHT AND PAID FOR

WHO'S BEHIND THE PRESIDENT'S FUNDRAISING MACHINE — AND WHAT THEY EXPECT IN RETURN

BY CRAIG AARON

IT'S OFFICIAL: PRESIDENT BUSH'S RE-ELECTION campaign is underway.

For those who haven't been paying attention—and Bush, Cheney and their corporate cronies certainly hope you haven't—the president officially launched his campaign at a March 20 “kickoff” rally in Orlando. “I’m looking forward to this campaign ahead,” Bush told the assembled party faithful between chants of “Four more years!” and “USA!

USA!” “With you at my side, there is no doubt in my mind we’re headed to a victory.”

Bush may claim the “political season” is just beginning, but he has spent the past nine months crisscrossing the country on a dash for cash, personally headlining \$45 million fundraising events on the way to amassing an unprecedented \$170 million campaign war chest. Awestruck by the sheer amount of cash on hand, the media sometimes mistake Bush's piles of money for popularity. Venality is more like it. Bush has turned the election into an auction, an invitation-only opportunity for Corporate America to prove its loyalty to the president.

The engine in Bush's money machine has been an elite regiment of 455 “Rangers” and “Pioneers,” the honorary titles bestowed on fundraisers who can collect at least \$200,000 or \$100,000, respectively. Legally, each of these individuals is limited to a maximum donation of \$2,000. But the Bush campaign has perfected a sophisticated system of bundling—by which corpo-

rate executives, lobbyists or other insiders pool a large number of contributions to maximize their political influence. The Rangers and Pioneers have collected at least \$64.2 million so far.

In return, these worthies have received access to the administration, relaxed regulations, legislative favors, targeted tax breaks, lucrative federal contracts, and plum appointments at home and abroad. But some hold more of a stake in Bush's re-election than others: The 10 industries profiled on the following pages have been among the most generous supporters of the president—and they stand to reap the greatest rewards if Dubya prevails in November.

Bullish on Bush

Nearly one in five Rangers and Pioneers comes from the financial sector. This group of 85 bankers, stockbrokers and wealthy private investors—which has bundled at least \$12.5 million for the 2004 Bush campaign—includes 20 top Wall Street executives. Wall Street firms account for six of the top 10 companies whose employees have donated the most to Bush this cycle.

Bush's economic policies—particularly the sweeping dividend, capital gains and income tax cuts—have lined Wall Street's pockets. Now the industry is leading the drive to make the Bush tax cuts permanent, endorsing administration plans to overhaul the retirement system and salivating over the prospect of Social Security privatization.

These same firms have been at the center of almost every major corporate scandal from Enron to World-

com to Martha Stewart. Yet Wall Street is banking on Bush to muzzle watchdogs like New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer and fend off further regulation of mutual funds, derivatives trading and arcane, highly profitable tax-avoidance schemes. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that hedge fund consultant Lee Hennessee sent out invitations to a March 11 Bush fundraiser with this message: "The current administration is favorable to the hedge fund industry, and we need to do all we can to keep them in office."

Under the Influence

Fundraising for Bush is a win-win situation for Washington lobbyists. Achieving Ranger or Pioneer status ensures insider access to the administration, which these influence-peddlers can then turn around and market to their clients. The client lists of major Bush backers read like a corporate scandal sheet—from Boeing and Wal-Mart to Tyco and the tobacco companies.

The 55 Rangers and Pioneers registered as federal lobbyists have bundled at least \$6.7 million in contributions for Bush this cycle. These same lobbyists met repeatedly with Dick Cheney's secret energy task force to do the bidding of energy interests, took millions from drug companies to help push through the Medicare bill and led the fight for Bush's tax cuts on behalf of the business community.

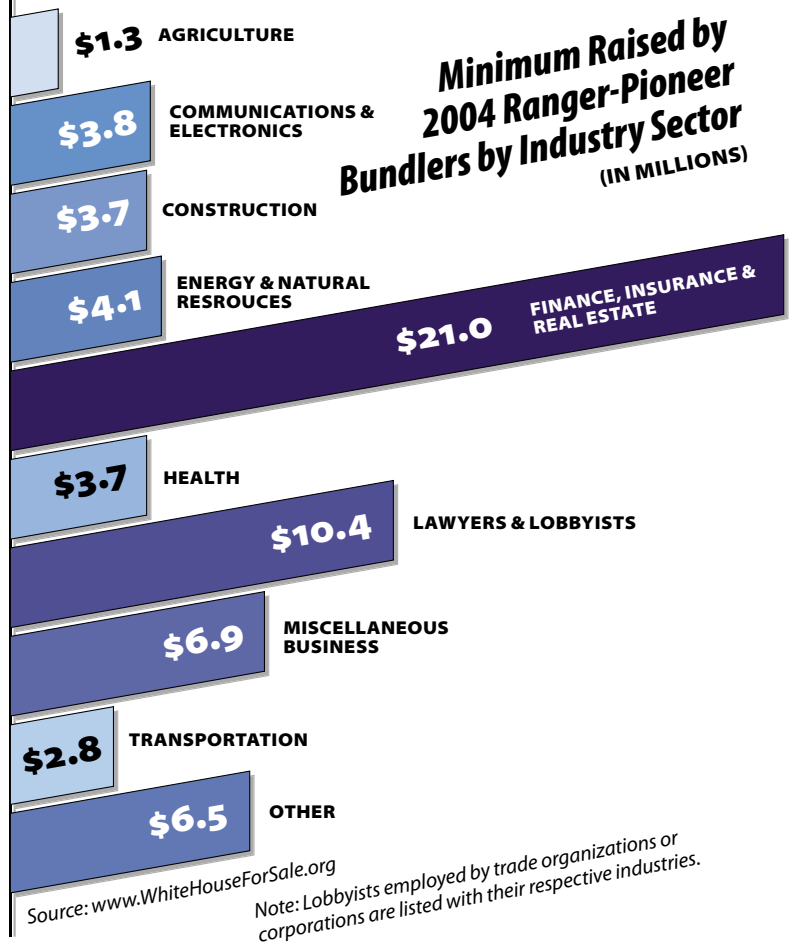
While the Bush campaign has produced ads attacking Senator John Kerry for being beholden to "special interests," the president has accepted more in direct contributions from lobbyists in 2003 than Kerry did in the past 15 years. "The issue is hypocrisy in saying you're going to take on the special interests, not who took the most special interest money," Bush media strategist Mark McKinnon told the *Washington Post*. "You don't hear the president in the Oval Office railing against the special interests."

Shocking Developers

Real estate developers, who have donated at least \$32.2 million to Bush campaign efforts since 1999, have helped shape the White House's anti-environment agenda. Working closely with its developer friends and donors, the Bush administration repeatedly has attempted to weaken the protection of wetlands. And under Bush, the Endangered Species Act—long seen as a major obstacle by developers—is threatened with extinction.

Nowhere is the Bush administration's favoritism for developers more apparent than in Florida, home to a third of the more than three dozen Rangers and Pioneers from the real estate industry. To oversee the fragile western Everglades, President Bush appointed an EPA regional administrator who has made it nearly impossible to deny permits for developers wishing to build there. EPA biologist Bruce Boler quit after the agency endorsed a developer-financed study that concluded wetlands discharge more pollution than they absorb.

One of the developers who helped finance the study—which implied water quality could be improved by replacing wetlands with golf courses and mansions—is Al Hoffman, a Ranger and finance chairman of the Republican National Committee. Hoffman has



described regulators as radicals "who think the world will end if they can't protect that little tree."

Power Play

In May 1999, Thomas Kuhn, president of the Edison Electric Institute, sent a letter to his colleagues in the electric utility industry soliciting support for Bush's nascent presidential campaign. Kuhn exhorted them to include his campaign tracking number on their checks to "ensure that our industry is credited."

The industry must have earned extra credit for the \$5.2 million it contributed to Bush in the 2000 election. Electric utility officials and their high-priced lobbyists served on the Bush transition team and met behind closed doors numerous times with Cheney's secret energy task force. "Just because somebody makes a campaign contribution," Cheney told the Associated Press, "doesn't mean they should be denied the opportunity to express their view to government officials."

Recommendations by the Cheney task force led to the undoing of a key clean air rule that required electric utilities to install modern anti-pollution equipment at old, coal-fired plants when they made major upgrades that significantly increased emissions. The rule change will save the utility companies billions. Bringing the plants into compliance would have reduced emissions by nearly 7 million tons annually, cutting air pollution from U.S. power plants in half.

CRAIG AARON
 is an investigative reporter for Public Citizen's Congress Watch. Portions of this article originally appeared in the Public Citizen report Bush's Campaign Ads ... Brought to You by Special Interests, which is available in full at www.WhiteHouseForSale.org.

Top 15 Contributing Companies to Bush for 2004

COMPANY*	TOTAL
Merrill Lynch	\$434,654
PricewaterhouseCoopers	\$337,550
UBS Americas	\$336,150
MBNA Corp.	\$335,750
Goldman Sachs	\$272,475
Credit Suisse First Boston	\$240,750
Lehman Brothers	\$227,496
Bear Stearns	\$219,000
Blank Rome LLP	\$206,900
Ernst & Young	\$188,205
Citigroup Inc.	\$172,250
Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu	\$161,200
Microsoft Corp.	\$160,050
Southern Co.	\$158,197
Haynes & Boone	\$157,650

Source: Center for Responsive Politics. * Individual donations by employees.

Next on Bush's agenda was the Clear Skies initiative, which would allow the release of far more sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide and airborne mercury than existing regulations—delaying by as much as a decade cuts currently required under the Clean Air Act. Kuhn has called Clear Skies “an exciting opportunity for our industry.”

The biggest prize of all for the electric utility industry may be the proposed repeal of the Public Utility Holding Company Act, which would lead to widespread deregulation and consolidation of electric utilities. Repealing PUCHA would put an estimated \$1 trillion in regulated electric power generation, transmission and distribution facilities up for sale to the highest bidder. This would allow big power companies and Bush backers like Southern Co. and Cinergy to merge and expand, encouraging further Enron-style debacles.

Oil Slicksters

The Bush administration's handouts to the oil and gas industries have gone beyond a wildcatter's wildest dreams. Oil and gas companies, which gave \$13.4 million to Bush campaign efforts in 2000, were welcomed in Washington with open arms. At least a dozen industry officials were named to the Bush transition team. Not surprisingly, the administration's energy policy has focused on expanding the supply of fossil fuels—largely by opening up public lands to exploration—rather than reducing demand through efficiency and alternative energy sources.

The centerpiece of the administration's strategy is drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, even though this precious ecosystem likely contains only enough oil to satisfy six months of U.S. demand. The

Senate rejected this scheme again last year, but the administration continues to press forward. Bush's 2005 budget includes \$2.4 billion in projected revenues from oil lease sales in ANWR in 2006.

In 2000, the oil and gas industry produced 41 Pioneers. But in the current cycle just a dozen industry rainmakers are on the list. They include several long-time Bush supporters from Texas such as billionaire Lee Bass and Nancy Kinder (Ken Lay's former secretary, whose husband Richard, was an ex-president of Enron). The oil goliaths such as ConocoPhillips and Exxon may be holding back until passage of the energy bill, which contains billions in industry benefits. Or perhaps these companies are keeping a lower political profile, hoping to avoid a Halliburton-like backlash.

King Coal

“You did everything you could to elect a Republican president,” William Raney, director of the West Virginia Coal Association told a group of industry executives in May 2001, after the Bush administration reneged on its pledge to regulate carbon dioxide emissions and abandoned the Kyoto global warming treaty. “You are already seeing in his actions the payback, if you will, his gratitude for what we did.”

The paybacks just kept coming. In 2002, the EPA adopted an environmentally devastating rule promoting mountaintop removal coal mining, which would allow companies to bury hundreds of miles of streams under piles of rubble. A federal judge found that the rule change was “designed simply of the benefit of the mining industry.” Bush Pioneer James H. “Buck” Harless sits on the board of Massey Energy, one of the biggest practitioners of mountaintop removal mining.

An even bigger gift to the mining industry would be passage of the energy bill. Even the “slimmed down” version of the bill crafted to speed its passage still contains \$7.4 billion in subsidies and tax breaks for the mining industry. Jack Gerard, head of the National Mining Association and another Bush Pioneer, told the West Virginia Coal Symposium in January that “the Energy Policy Act may well be the best opportunity the mining industry will have in our lifetimes.”

Prescription for Profits

Pharmaceutical companies and their executives have spent half a billion dollars since 1999 on lobbying, campaign contributions and industry front groups in an all-out effort to prevent a Medicare prescription drug benefit that would give government the power to negotiate lower prices. Decrying “price controls” and clamoring for a “market-based” solution, the nation's drug-makers—already the most profitable industry in the country—have made it clear they won't tolerate any threat to their bottom line.

The Medicare bill passed by Congress and signed by Bush last fall is tailor-made to their interests. Projected to cost taxpayers at least \$530 billion over 10 years, the bill greatly expands the customer base for the pharmaceutical giants but ensures that the prescription drug

benefit will be administered by private companies. In fact, the bill expressly prohibits the government from negotiating lower prices.

The drug industry also has aggressively opposed the “re-importation” of less expensively priced drugs from Canada. Pfizer, whose CEO Hank McKinnell is a Ranger, has threatened to blacklist any Canadian pharmacy that sells drugs to Americans. The Bush administration has marched in lockstep with the drug-makers, insisting drugs from Canada pose a risk to public safety. Yet when pressed by Congress to substantiate these claims, one top FDA official admitted, “We have very little evidence.”

The real danger, it seems, is to drug company profit margins.

Bad for Your Healthcare

Executives in managed care, hospitals and nursing homes also stand to profit from the massive Medicare package, which promises them additional billions. For example, managed-care companies like UnitedHealth—which is headed by Pioneer William McGuire—will take in at least an extra \$14.2 billion over 10 years in payments designed to entice them to offer drug coverage, according to the Congressional Budget Office. And Medicare revenues for managed-care companies are expected to increase six-fold from \$37 billion in 2003 to \$226 billion by 2010.

Meanwhile, the president is pushing federal medical malpractice legislation, which would insulate healthcare providers from the costs of their own negligence by limiting court awards to patients, especially those who have been catastrophically injured. Charles “Chip” Kahn III, president of the Federation of American Hospitals, told the *National Journal*: “Medical-malpractice reform is a mountaintop issue for our members. That’s why people were motivated and why we were successful” at soliciting enough campaign contributions to become a Pioneer.

Bush’s push for medical malpractice legislation also earns him points with doctors’ groups and nursing homes. Consider the potential benefits to Ranger W. Andrew Adams, president of the nursing home chain National Healthcare Corp. When it comes to negligence and liability, Adams has obvious concerns: As of June 2003, his company faced at least 87 personal injury or wrongful death lawsuits—including 46 suits in Florida alone, where the company was forced to close up shop after its insurer canceled its liability policy. More lawsuits may be on the way: A fire in September killed 14 residents in a company facility in Nashville that had not been equipped with sprinklers.

Unfairness Inc.

Tort reform also is a top priority of the insurance industry, which has given more than \$12 million to Bush’s federal campaigns. The Class Action Fairness Act—a Bush-backed bill now held up in the Senate—would help insurance companies and their corporate clients by pushing more cases from state to federal courts, where judges are far more likely to avoid certifying class action lawsuits.

Of the nine insurance companies with Bush Pioneers,

at least seven have faced potential class-action suits for illegally denying claims for necessary medical treatments, using misleading sales practices, deceiving shareholders, retaliating against internal whistleblowers, and even failing to pay benefits on policies held by Holocaust victims.

None of this fazes Bush, who has praised the industry for working “long and hard” on the tort reform issue. As one official boasted to an industry trade magazine, “Any time the president of the United States uses his bully pulpit to remind the American people that an out-of-control legal system hurts consumers—that is a good day.”

Media Monopolies

On February 2, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) swung into action, promising a “thorough and swift” investigation of a burgeoning national media calamity: Janet Jackson’s Super Bowl striptease.

For his part, President Bush claimed he dozed off during the second quarter and missed all the excitement. Jackson’s “wardrobe malfunction” may have garnered all the head-

‘You did everything you could do to elect a Republican president. You are already seeing in his actions the payback, if you will, his gratitude for what we did.’

lines, but the real outrage at the FCC under Bush has been the nonstop deregulation and unfettered consolidation of the companies controlling the airwaves. On these issues, the president hoped to catch the public napping.

Yet the FCC decision to allow one company to own television stations reaching up to 45 percent of the U.S. viewing public was second only to the Iraq war in the number of complaints received on Capitol Hill last year. Eventually, the White House signed off on a “compromise” ownership cap of 39 percent—just enough to ensure that neither News Corp. nor Viacom would have to sell any stations.

But returning Bush to office—and thus preserving the 3-to-2 Republican majority at the FCC—is crucial for the next round of media mega-mergers to win approval. After all, that narrow 3-to-2 margin made possible the controversial \$3 billion merger of Univision and Hispanic Broadcasting. Univision Chairman and CEO Jerry Perenchio, a Pioneer, profited handsomely from the deal, which combined his television network with the country’s largest Spanish-language radio network.

But the Univision merger was small potatoes compared to Comcast’s plans for media domination. On February 11, the country’s largest provider of cable TV and broadband Internet services made an unsolicited offer to buy Walt Disney for \$47.8 billion. If the deal goes through, it would create the largest media company in the world. Comcast Cable President Stephen Burke already has raised \$200,000 for Bush’s re-election. ■



THE CHINA SYNDROME

BY DAVID MOBERG

MORE THAN 1,200 WORKERS FROM the Tieshu Textile Factory in the Chinese city of Suzhou peacefully blocked railroad tracks this February to protest corruption among factory managers that had cost them nearly \$25 million in pay, pensions and investments.

Hundreds of police broke up the demonstration, beating many and arresting six for “disturbing social order.” It’s not unusual: Employers increasingly refuse to pay workers what they’re owed—nearly \$40 billion in 2002.

The violation of labor rights is the dark side of China’s economic boom. But it’s not just a problem for Chinese workers. It’s also a problem for Manitowoc County, Wisconsin, and Mexican workers in the maquiladora assembly plants along the country’s northern border, as hundreds of factories have moved to China.

In a global economy, an injury to Chinese workers becomes an injury to workers from Wisconsin to Ciudad Juarez. That’s the argument of a groundbreaking trade initiative filed by the AFL-CIO in March. By asking the president to impose tariffs on Chinese products, to negotiate a binding agreement with China to enforce labor rights, and to insist on labor rights protections in all trade agreements under the World Trade Organization, the labor federation is the first to employ a 1988 provision in U.S. trade law that defines systematic denial of worker rights as an unreasonable trade practice.

The petition, prepared by Columbia University law professor Mark Barenberg, argues: “China’s unremitting repression of workers’ rights takes wages, health and dignity not only from China’s workers. It also displaces and impoverishes workers—and their families and communities—in the United States and throughout the world.”

The petition argues that suppression of labor rights, including an

apartheid-like pass system that subjects rural migrants working in urban factories to a regime of bonded labor, depresses wages below what would exist in a free labor market, giving manufacturers there unfair advantage. As a result, using an economic model employed by the U.S. International Trade Commission, the petition argues that the United States has lost as many as 727,000 jobs to China.

Mark Levinson, chief economist of UNITE, the main apparel and textile union, argues: "This is not simply about U.S. jobs. I wanted this to be our vision of the global economy. This is not a protectionist petition. If anything, it's a critique of the prevailing approach to globalization." Without worker rights enforced everywhere, he says, a country like China drives wages to the bottom, which are now often as low as 15 to 30 cents an hour for migrant factory workers. As the petition states, "the denial of labor rights reduces wages and economic growth, increases inequality and hampers democratic development," while primarily benefiting a "narrow elite."

All workers theoretically belong to the All China Federation of Trade Unions. But despite some signs of life, it remains ineffective and largely controlled by the Communist Party and factory managers. As Australian National University China expert Anita Chan reports, monthly minimum wages (set locally) have steadily fallen below guidelines set by the national government, and neither the minimum wage nor limits on working hours are being enforced.

The key to China's distinctive suppression of workers, however, is the *hukou*, or household registration, system. Workers with a rural *hukou*, the vast majority of new factory workers, can't compete for better jobs or receive the housing, health and pension benefits reserved for urban residents. They must obtain a bewildering variety of expensive permits to get urban factory jobs. Often these rural migrants—typically young and disproportionately female—pay for jobs. If they leave, they risk losing their "deposits" and permit fees, which together can amount to many months of wages. They effectively become bonded labor, powerless in the face of demands by their employers and confined to the factory and grim dormitories.

"The entrenched myth in China is that peasants will tolerate any degree of suffering, whereas leaders of the Communist Party are most fearful of movements among discontented urban workers," Barenberg said. Wealth is still transferred from the impoverished countryside to stabilize the cities, but rural migrants now are exploited when they come to town. With as many as 350 million peasants in dire poverty, every year more rural residents enter the workforce than the total of manufacturing in the United States.

Because of this huge supply of labor, Nicholas Lardy, a China expert at the Institute for International Economics, argues: "I just find it quite frankly very implausible that if Chinese workers have the right to organize, they could raise their wages by the amounts suggested [in the AFL-CIO petition]. ... Their wages are going to be a teeny fraction of U.S. wages regardless of institutional arrangements."

Barenberg argues that Chinese wages would rise significantly if minimums were enforced and if workers were not chained by the *hukou* system. He concludes that "China's labor repression lowers manufacturing wages by 47.4 percent to 85.6 percent," and consequently lowers the price of exports by 11 to 44 percent.

"Sure, millions of jobs would go to China even if China were enforcing worker rights," Barenberg acknowledges. "But on the economic margin a lot of jobs would not go to China." Lardy agrees

that if enforcing worker rights brought big wage increases, China's export advantage would shrink.

As foreign investment flows into the country and peasants into the cities, the "supply shock" of Chinese manufactured goods is likely to be devastating—especially when quotas for exports of apparel and textiles to the United States and Europe end in December. The United States may lose 650,000 apparel and textile jobs, including about 1,300 textile plants, over the next two and a

China's unremitting repression of worker's rights takes wages, health and dignity not only from China's workers but from all other workers throughout the world.

half years. But according to U.N. Development Program data, dirt-poor Bangladesh and Indonesia will lose up to 1 million apparel and textile jobs to China, and Central America and the Caribbean could lose half that.

Bush has 45 days from the filing to decide whether to review the case. For the sake of politics he might accept a review, but for the sake of his corporate buddies it's certain he will do no more. If Senator John Kerry, who offered a somewhat sympathetic reaction to the petition, wins, this could be the first test of whether he's willing to adopt a new vision of a more equitable global economy. ■

**CHEAP LAUGHS AT BUSH'S EXPENSE!
SUBSCRIBE TO THE**

HUMOR TIMES!

**HILARIOUS
POLITICAL
CARTOONS,
AS WELL AS
HUMOR COLUMNS &
NON-POLITICAL PANELS!**

YES, FOR LESS THAN ONE
NIGHT AT THE MOVIES,
YOU CAN LAUGH ALL YEAR!

GO TO WWW.HUMORTIMES.COM OR SEND A CHECK
OR MONEY ORDER FOR ONLY \$15⁰⁰
(FOR 12 ISSUES) TO:

**Humor Times
P.O.B. 162429
Sacramento,
CA 95816**

ALSO... SAMPLE ISSUES CAN
BE HAD FOR MERELY \$1⁰⁰ !!!



No 'Choice'

Wal-Mart Prepares to Bury the Left Under a Mountain of Money

BY GLEN FORD AND PETER GAMBLE

JIM, JOHN, ALICE, SAM AND HELEN MAY CARRY THE world's most dangerous genetic markers. They are the Waltons, heirs to the global destructive force called Wal-Mart.

With more than \$100 billion in personal assets among them, the five Waltons occupy positions six through 10 in the Forbes billionaires rankings, twice as rich as Microsoft's Bill Gates, the guy at the top. Collectively, they are antisocial malevolence with a last name. These spawn of Bentonville, Arkansas harbor an abiding hatred for the public sphere: business regulatory controls, nondiscrimination laws, wage and workplace safety standards, the social safety net—all of it—as expressed through the operations of their retail empire, which is both the largest employer in the United States and biggest importer of goods made in China. As the Democratic Socialists of America put it: "Wal-Mart is more than just a participant in the low-wage economy: It is the most important single beneficiary of that economy. It uses its economic and political power to extend the scope of the low-wage economy and threatens to extend its business model into other sectors of the economy, undermining the wages of still more workers."

Such a vast project of political economy is far too complex for four middle-aged children of wealth and the 84-year-old matriarch, Helen. The family's immediate personal ambitions are more modest: to destroy public education in the United States. To that end the Waltons, through their Walton Family Foundation and in close collaboration with Milwaukee's Bradley Foundation, literally invented the national school "choice" network and its wedge issue-weapon, vouchers.

It is the existence of the school vouchers "movement" that allows the Bush administration to savage and massively disrupt the nation's public schools while positing "alternative" forms of education, both vouchers and charter schools that often operate very

much like public-funded private schools. "Choice" has become national policy under Bush's Department of Education, which has doled out more than \$75 million to organizations birthed by the Waltons, Bradley and their allies. (See "Funding a Movement" by People for the American Way, www.pfaw.org.)

Public education's defenders, already outgunned by the combined resources of the right-wing political funding network plus the full weight of the Republican executive branch, now await the deluge: an infusion of \$20 billion into the Walton's private philanthropy, most of it earmarked for education "reform"—the euphemism for school privatization. At the usual rate of foundation disbursement, this would translate as \$1 billion a year—a tidal wave of money, enough to reinvent the voucher "movement" many times over.

The Money Storm

The Waltons' planned transfer of \$20 billion in Wal-Mart stock to the family foundation, most likely precipitated by tax exigencies, was heralded by the corporate media as a boon to prospects for education "reform." Family voucher impresario John styles himself a savior of inner-city dropouts. "They're choosing the streets over a school that apparently doesn't work for them," Walton told a receptive *USA Today* reporter. "If choice destroys the public system, then why are we so sanguine about the choices those kids make?"

This minority-aimed wedge has a sharp edge. The obscenely rich Waltons aren't slumming, but rather are pursuing a super-cynical, fiendishly clever, grand strategy on the way to final victory: destruction of the public sphere. Although the Waltons and their friends would love to franchise (and, ultimately, monopolize) the education "market"—K-12 is worth \$350 billion yearly to taxpayers—it is a mistake to view school privatization in vulgar market terms. That's not how the denizens of right-funded think tanks think.

The public schools by far are the most pervasive public institutions, social spaces, in American society. Therefore, they must be made fully subservient to private capital. To the world-coveters of the Waltons' class (all several hundred of them, plus their legions of hirelings), public education is more an obstacle than a potential convertible asset.

In the here and now, two forces stand in the way of total corporate hegemony over U.S. political life: Black American voters and organized labor, particularly the teachers unions, whose members are highly active and dependably progressive even in the more reactionary regions of the country. Blacks and labor are the two pillars of the national Democratic Party, without which not even a shell would remain.

Vouchers are the right's chosen tools to pit African Americans (and more recently, Hispanics) against the teachers unions and labor in general (an ambitious plan, since blacks make up a disproportionate chunk of organized labor). The Waltons and their paid strategists believe they have identified the soft spot in the black body politic: the confluence of African-American reverence for education and the cruel denial of educational justice in the cities. Through relatively small outlays of money—small, that is, for the super-rich—and a great deal of corporate media collaboration, the right has made great strides in just a few years in using the voucher “issue” (it was never an issue for blacks, before) to create the impression that there exists a substantial “alternative,” “conservative” political current in black America. This myth is given credibility through purchase of black spokespersons for the right-funded (and now federally-funded) voucher “movement.” An “alternative” black political leadership is being assembled around school “choice,” totally beholden to the most reactionary elements of corporate America. Should these black compradors gain significant traction, progressive resistance to corporate (and racist) rule in the United States will collapse.

How much traction can a billion dollars a year buy? Nobody in black America has ever seen the kind of money that the Walton Foundation will have at its disposal once the \$20 billion stock transfer is completed. The prospect is terrifying.

Progressives are hard pressed, as it is. The two principal advocacy organizations opposed to vouchers are People for the American Way (PFAW) and the NAACP, with annual budgets of about \$15 million and \$30 million, respectively. The teachers unions—the National Education Association (NEA, 2.7 million members) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT, 1 million members) spend about \$350 million a year combined, for all purposes. Only a tiny fraction of these organizations' resources can be spared for the anti-voucher

fight, while right-wing foundations and the Bush Education Department lavish tens of millions on voucher propaganda, recruitment, cooptation and institution-building.

If the Waltons continue their policy of allocating about 80 percent of their grants to education, and if only half that amount is targeted to “reform”—privatization in one guise or the other—their yearly “choice” war chest would be larger than the combined budgets of the NEA, the AFT, the NAACP and PFAW. That's overkill.

War Against All

If evil could be branded, its emblem would be the Wal-Mart logo. The retailer has become so large, and behaves so aggressively, it sometimes appears as a force of nature, like weather. Three huge grocery chains with a 70 percent combined national, big-city market share ambushed the United Food and Commercial Workers union this winter, all the while crying that Wal-Mart's low-wage, few-benefits “model” made them do it. After more than three months on strike and lockout, UFCW President Doug Dority accepted a two-tier, higher premium health coverage settlement. If the Wal-Mart model is a pri-

To the world-coveters of the Waltons' class, public education is more an obstacle than a potential convertible asset.

vate-sector inevitability, then larger circles of solidarity are the only defense. The UFCW Web site carried Dority's statement:

We must have national health-care reform. No one company, no one union, no industry or group of workers alone can fix the healthcare system. ... Now is the time for action. 2004 is the year to put health care reform on the political agenda and demand that every candidate for office commits to comprehensive, affordable health insurance for every working family.

Labor can't beat the Wal-Mart model piecemeal, or even if it were united. A larger mobilization is needed.

Wal-Mart shifts the burden of its exploitation to the public, causing federal taxpayers to pay more than \$2,000 per employee in social safety net costs to subsidize John, Jim, Sam, Alice and Helen's profits. In Georgia, Wal-Mart employees' kids wind up in disproportionate numbers on the state program for uninsured chil-

(continued on page 29)

WAL-MART FACTS

Number of Georgia children on subsidized healthcare whose parents work at Wal-Mart	10,260
Percent of Wal-Mart workers who can't afford the company health plan	55
Percent of healthcare premiums Wal-Mart workers have to pay	40
Percent that workers have to pay at average Fortune 500 company	20
Rank of Wal-Mart among biggest employers in U.S.	1
Amount taxpayers subsidize average Wal-Mart store through welfare programs a year	\$420,750
Number of world's 10 richest people who are Wal-Mart executives	5

Chris Kromm, executive director, Institute for Southern Studies

Wal-Mart

Continued from page 23

dren. Wal-Mart is Georgia's No. 1 employer, and the state can't fight that kind of power—not alone.

In Los Angeles, Wal-Mart attempts to usurp the public's power to decide how communities are developed, asserting a virtual right to barge in where it's not wanted. Coalition for a Better Inglewood representative the Rev. Altagracia Perez invokes a more comprehensive constituency and a deeper principle:

Despite its track record throughout this country of replacing good jobs with poverty-wage jobs, driving out small businesses and destroying communities, Wal-Mart is asking voters to sign away all their rights to regulate development in their community. If the Wal-Mart initiative goes forward unchallenged, it will send a signal that communities have no role, no voice, no power in the decisions that affect their lives. We cannot let this happen.

The circles of resistance become larger, because the Wal-Mart model attempts to diminish and weaken us all. Wal-Mart wants more than blood—it covets every inch of social space, the places where human civilization lives.

Soon the diabolical Walton family will pump a billion more dollars a year into its offensive against public education, seeking to saturate African-American politics with paid flunkies, drive a wedge between blacks and labor, and cripple the people's ability to resist.

We must build a bigger circle. ■

GLEN FORD and **PETER GAMBLE** are co-publishers of *The Black Commentator*, www.blackcommentator.com.



Three Ways to Shape a Better World With Your Investments

Domini Social Equity Fund®
offers growth opportunities through a portfolio of stocks selected for their social and environmental performance.

Domini Social Bond Fund®
provides diversification while supporting homeowners and small business owners in struggling communities.

Domini Money Market Account®
offers safety and liquidity through FDIC-insured deposits that help promote community development.

Please obtain a current prospectus for more complete information including risks, fees, and expenses, by calling 1-800-530-5321 or online at www.domini.com.

Domini 
PUBLIC INVESTMENTS®
The Way You Invest Matters™

Visit www.domini.com or Call us at 1-800-530-5321

The Domini Social Equity Fund and the Domini Social Bond Fund are subject to market risks and are not insured. You may lose money. The Domini Social Bond Fund's community development investments may be unrated and carry greater credit risks than the Fund's other investments. The Domini Social Bond Fund currently holds a large percentage of its portfolio in mortgage-backed securities. During periods of falling interest rates these securities may prepay the principal due, which may lower the Fund's return by causing it to reinvest at lower interest rates. DSIL Investment Services LLC, Distributor (DSILD), 10/03

CHOICE • JUSTICE • ACCESS • HEALTH



Washington D.C. April 25, 2004

ABORTION • GLOBAL • FAMILY PLANNING

Women's reproductive rights
and health are in jeopardy.

Join us in Washington, D.C. on April 25,
to sound the alarm and rouse this country
to action as never before.

For more information log on to:
MarchforWomen.org

Organizers: American Civil Liberties Union • Black Women's Health Imperative • Feminist Majority
NARAL Pro-Choice America • National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
National Organization for Women (NOW) • Planned Parenthood Federation of America

Cosponsoring Partners: Center for Reproductive Rights • National Abortion Federation
National Association of Social Workers • National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association
National Partnership for Women and Families • National Women's Law Center

Nearly 1,000 Cosponsors and Still Growing



BY JEFF SHAW

The Price Is Wrong

You've got bladder cancer. Or maybe it's chronic bronchitis. Same difference, right? Both are extremely painful and debilitating but not always fatal; both have environmental triggers that governmental regulation can prevent. So they're

basically the same thing—at least according to the Bush administration, which uses a crude array of malleable statistics to decide whether measures to protect the ecology and the public are worthwhile in economic terms.

Unlike a terminal disease, which is worth spending several million dollars to prevent, your disease—either one—is worth dropping only about \$260,000 to halt.

Such decision-making happens under the innocuous-sounding banner of “cost-benefit analysis.” Cold-blooded calculations like this come under heavy fire in *Priceless*, a new book by economist Frank Ackerman and environmental law professor Lisa Heinzerling.

Priceless explains why your disease isn't that important, at least to this administration. Because it probably won't kill you, you'll likely live to work—and contribute

to the economy. So don't worry, they say, and quit your whining about painful urination (or troubled breathing). And definitely shut your trap if you're not white, because you probably don't earn as much and thus won't be as valuable to the country's growth prospects. And absolutely zip it if you're elderly, given you have fewer years of productivity than a younger person.

Even if you are a spry, white male, though, the odds of a regulatory remedy aren't good. Tough water quality standards that might prevent future bladder cancers (or air-quality standards that might prevent chronic bronchitis) also prevent things like wood-burning energy plants that employ people.

Protecting air and water has economic benefits, too, but federal regulators choose not to recognize them. The

perverse logic pervading their calculations tends to ignore the positive aspects of regulation—like avoiding swollen healthcare costs in the long run—and focuses only on the drawbacks, which are often short-term.

Priceless tells a gripping story about how solid science has been shoved to the backburner by bean counters with ideological blinders. The book reveals in stark detail the shady accounting practices that go into devaluing the substantial contribution environmental regulations make to public health—and how the Bush administration at every turn has undermined common-sense measures supported by most scientists.

The problems with a cost-benefit approach predate the current administration. Before George W. Bush appointed his first critic of regulation to a federal post, the growing cabal of anti-scientists used this analytic tool to declare that we should be more concerned with such issues as murderous herds of deer than

... [causing] traffic injuries and deaths,” as a 1999 *Stanford Law Review* article put it.

Of course, there was a possibility that terrorism would increase, just as there was the possibility that toxic waste dumps could create future cancer epidemics—just as there is a solid chance that human-caused climate disruption will create devastating impacts. But cost-benefit analysis rarely considers this because it doesn’t have to. Because risk analysis is based only on existing numbers of deaths caused by particular events, and often erroneously projects worst-case death tolls, it can’t provide the intellectual tools to prepare for future catastrophes. Used this way, *Priceless* argues, cost-benefit analysis makes us blind (perhaps willfully so) to pressing public health issues.

The book’s great strength is its in-depth explanation of the cost-benefit evaluation process. While sometimes descending into policy wonk lingo, *Priceless* makes economists’ arcane vocabulary as accessible as possible, taking the reader into a world where life is systematically devalued through accounting tricks.

These tricks, as Ackerman and Heinzerling show, often mean weighing total costs against utterly incomplete benefits. Refusing to consider future generations fully human is one telling example—they get only a small fraction of “benefit” consideration so any policy that would predominantly benefit our children and grandchildren is discounted.

At best, this reveals a fatal flaw in the system. At worst, it reveals cynical politics at work under the guise of objectivity. Don’t like a regulation? Declare it to be economically inefficient. What if you can’t prove that, given the regulation actually is worth the cost? Cook the numbers to consider only the short-term impact so it looks otherwise. In theory

and in practice, this demonstrates structural biases against regulation in and of itself.

While *Priceless* is an invaluable in-depth tool for understanding how this type of policymaking corrupts meaningful research, a recent report from the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) provides a quick and punchy summary of this shortsighted viewpoint and its human impact.

The UCS study—signed by more than 60 top-tier scientists and released in February—found “a well-established pattern of suppression and distortion of scientific findings by high-ranking Bush administration political appointees,” and that “the scope and scale of the manipulation, suppression and misrepresentation of science by the Bush administration is unprecedented.” It showcases, among many other examples, a U.S. Department of Agriculture microbiologist who was prevented from publicizing his work on harmful airborne bacteria. These bacteria, generated by farm waste, pose grave

threats to human health, but Dr. James Zahn’s research was suppressed.

What is most striking about reading *Priceless* and the UCS report in succession is the stunning lack of overlap in the source material. Though each document cites myriad examples of science being suppressed—ranging from work on air and water pollution to toxic waste, from endangered species protection to workplace safety—almost no anecdotes are repeated. This spotlights just how many documented incidents of open hostility to truth seeking we’ve seen in this administration.

Taken together, they paint a chilling picture of an administration more concerned with consolidating its power than national security or the health and welfare of Americans. It is often said that truth is the first casualty of war. Nowhere is this truer than in the Bush administration’s war on science. ■

JEFF SHAW is an award-winning journalist who writes on science and the environment for *In These Times*.

Priceless: On Knowing the Price of Everything and the Value of Nothing

By Frank Ackerman and
Lisa Heinzerling
The New Press
320 pages, \$25.95

with potential terrorist attacks.

Why? Cost-benefit analysis uses a count-the-bodies formulation that has inherent blind spots. When the influential Robert Hahn of the AEI-Brookings Joint Center for Regulatory Studies did a cost-benefit study of enhanced airport security measures in 1996, an average of 37 people annually died from terrorism.

Looking at these figures, Hahn concluded that improving airport security wasn’t worth the costs. Similarly, toxic waste dumps were a relatively small problem compared to “the millions of deer that roam the nations highways

ART SPACE



The Bread & Puppet Theater has addressed local and global injustices for more than 40 years. A book of photos by Ronald T. Simon and text by Marc Estrin, *Rehearsing with Gods*, coming in May from Chelsea Green Publishing, offers meditations on their artistry and impact.



BY TODD LILLETHUN

Life During Wartime

From a country torn by religious divisions and ethnic violence, *Broken Wings* breaks past the headlines to deliver a working-class family drama that could have been from any industrial country. And although there's

no mention of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, one senses that Middle Eastern politics nonetheless infuses the film in its chaos and overwhelming sense of crisis and loss.

The film opens with 17-year-old Maya (Maya Maron) preparing to sing with her band at a young musicians' competition in Tel Aviv. She's in good voice and they've been waiting to play out for months. But the thrill quickly dies—her mother calls to say she'll be working late at the hospital so Maya must pick up her sister from school.

Instead of enjoying her blooming youth, Maya plays surrogate mother to her three sullen siblings. Her 16-year-old brother Yair (Nitai Gvirtz) has dropped out of school and now passes out leaflets in the sub-

Broken Wings

Directed by Nir Bergman

way while dressed in a mouse costume. Her 11-year-old brother Ido (Daniel Magon) videotapes his mock death by jumping into an empty swimming pool as 6-year-old sister Bahr (Eliana Magon) watches in somber silence.

Their mother, Dafna Ullman (played by stage actress Orli Zilberschatz-Banai), senses her children's growing despair but cannot afford to be with them. Nine months ago their father died and she has become the sold breadwinner—working a low-paying night-shift job as a midwife in a Haifa hospital.

For all its troubled sadness and despair, *Broken Wings* fails to be

depressing—and its light touch and sense of humor speak to the family's resilience and tenacity. Rather than spiraling into anguish and doom, the story is poignant in its hope and reconciliation. Zilberschatz-Banai's forced cheerfulness is especially moving; with her weathered features and short stature, this mother's everyday heroism grounds the film with a quiet sanity. And genuine love lies beneath the chaos, so when disaster strikes it does not tear apart the family but bring it closer together.

These ironies articulate the family's struggle: the widowed mother working as a midwife, the joyless Yair wearing a comedic costume, the car that keeps dying and being pushed back to life, Ido videotaping

his own mock demise. Thankfully, the film flirts with these darker visions, but never fully indulges them. In this way the film wins the audience's trust—and we become involved in the character's lives regardless of what comes their way.

Writer-director Nir Bergman keeps such intimate moments unadorned in order to retain their power. The music and cinematography maintain low, judicious profiles, and he lets the actors connect with each other naturally. By keeping the specter of the father's death off-screen, he deepens each scene. The grief evoked underscores not only their turbulent past but also their will to live.

Though the press at the Toronto Film Festival made much of the absence of hometown strife, the exchange of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict for a smaller and more universal struggle does not belittle the film's origins or its story. Political reality haunts the proceedings much like the father's death: We expect it to turn up around every corner, but it never does. In a way, the film brings us closer to the conflict—by portraying its players in a domestic family drama, the film breaks down the sense of otherness that we ascribe to ethnicity, religion and class. We see not the angry, vengeful people portrayed on the evening news, but the common working class that transcends ethnic lines.

Broken Wings earned nine top prizes at the equivalent of the Israeli Academy Awards and made a healthy profit for Bergman in his feature debut. Yet it remains a small film in the best sense: In a large, turbulent ocean, it focuses on the shipwrecked characters, clinging to the life raft of their family riding out a giant wave. ■

TODD LILLETHUN is a documentary filmmaker in Chicago.



LENI SINCLAIR

BY JAMES PARKER

The Weathered Men

The Motor City Five, from Detroit, were a hell of a '60s band. Musically they blew minds with their high-voltage Who/Sun Ra fusion, and politically they did their stuff with more swing and more of what we now

call attitude than anybody else.

Alone among their peers, they played outside the '68 Democratic Convention in Chicago, taking off just before the truncheons came down. They lived in a commune, advocated cultural change through rock'n'roll, dope and fucking in the streets, constantly baited the pigs, and in solidarity with their revolutionary black brothers they formed the White Panther Party. Now, with the release of the documentary "MC5: A True Testimonial," they finally have their day at the movies.

It's a wild, sad film. Being in the MC5 took its toll. Two members—Rob Tyner and Fred "Sonic" Smith—are dead, and the rest seem to have arrived in late middle age disabled to varying degrees by the intensity

MC5: A True Testimonial Directed by David Thomas

of their young manhood. Bassist Mike Davis, interviewed on his desert ranch, is creased and crazy-eyed, with great vacancies in his speech. Drummer Dennis Thompson reeks of confinement: A ranting, unsettling presence, he sits in a small room, looms into the camera and says he dreams about his band every night. Wayne Kramer, lead guitarist, is the most impishly healthy and quick-thinking of the three survivors and almost commandeers the film. But speaking about the band's breakup he becomes desolate. The MC5 was brought down by the usual demons—drugs, squabbles, industry indiffer-

ence—but it is the height that they were brought down from that makes them exceptional. Peaking on self-belief, they felt themselves to be, in Davis' words, "at the center of the yin-yang"—agents of change, superheroes, for whom the world would either tilt toward the positive or spin off into hell.

Director David Thomas and his wife, producer Laurel Legler, have worked on the project since 1995. They love the MC5—no doubt about that—and as filmmakers they took an editorial stand to indulge the band and to swallow their story whole. Some wistful notes are sounded by the ex-wives, two nice, shrewd women who sit by a crackling fireplace and reminisce about sewing stage costumes for the

boys—"He liked ruffles, he did like his ruffles"—but there are no non-believers onscreen. A hint of real dissent, not just intra-band bickering, might have been nice as something to waft away the odor of hippy bombast, the gaseous declarations of ex-manager John Sinclair: "We were plugged into the Universe! And we were doing what the Universe wanted us to do!"

The fact that the Black Panthers considered the MC5 to be "psychedelic clowns" gets a mention, but the closest thing to skepticism is provided by Danny Fields, the wonderful music biz insider, who dryly rhapsodizes about the band's tight trousers and "Viking power": "John Sinclair was taking a shit with the bathroom door open, barking orders—the whole scene was just so BUTCH."

Detroit was a hotbed of great rock writing—Lester Bangs, for god's sake—but "A True Testimonial" offers no critical perspective on the band or its music. Bangs, for example, famously poo-hooped the MC5's first album *Kick Out The Jams*. He wasn't falling for the hype, he said, for the "thick overlay of teenage-revolution and total-energy-thing which conceals these scrapyard vistas of cliches and ugly noise." Equally famously, he changed his mind when he saw the 5 live. To see, apparently, was to believe, and the live footage shows you why: A performance of "Looking At You" at an open-air festival captures the MC5 groove—psychedelically sinuous but shuddering with crude R&B power—better than anything they recorded in a studio.

Now at last we can see those legendary dance steps, Wayne Kramer sliding on toe-points, Fred Smith windmilling his guitar, Rob Tyner wobbling the dark nimbus of his Afro.

It's really all you could ask for. ■

JAMES PARKER writes on film for *In These Times*.



BY DON THRASHER

Punk the Vote

President Bush had better watch his back. A growing number of punk rockers are gunning for him and there's nothing the Secret Service, the CIA or any other government entity can do to protect him because it's all

legit. Members of about 200 American punk bands such as NOFX, Anti-Flag and Pennywise have joined forces with record labels including Fat Wreck Chords, Alternative Tentacles and Epitaph to combat Dubya through the most powerful tool at their disposal: the ballot box. NOFX bassist and singer Fat Mike was growing increasingly discouraged by Bush's view of a civilized, modern America and in late 2003 mobilized friends, acquaintances and like-minded strangers to launch www.punkvoter.com.

Only 29 percent of the 8.4 million U.S. voters age 18 to

24 cast a ballot for president in the 2000 election. Fat Mike and the other members of the grassroots voter education coalition such as former Nirvana bassist Krist Novoselic, Billie Joe Armstrong of Green Day and former MC5 guitarist Wayne Kramer hope to register half a million young voters in an attempt to unseat Bush.

The Punk Voter campaign has its Web site set on dethroning the president, but the members don't suffer from such tunnel vision that they are blind to other issues. The organization recently took on Urban Outfitters and its T-shirt emblazoned with the message "Voting is

for Old People." Now, Punk Voter is focusing on Rod Paige, Bush's anti-teacher Secretary of Education who labeled the National Education Association and its 2.7 million members "a bunch of terrorists." Fat Mike also has invited liberal groups such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals and abortion rights group NARAL Pro-Choice America to set up booths outside NOFX concerts and to deliver messages from the stage.

In addition to the Web site, Punk Voter members have taken their message to the people with a string of voter registration concerts on the

West Coast and by spreading its messages through e-mails, the Internet, and articles in punk 'zines and the mainstream press. NOFX—whose latest album, *War on Errorism*, lambasted the president's policies—hosted an anti-Bush rally at the annual South by Southwest Music Festival in Austin, Texas in March. The event featured outspoken comedian and actor David Cross, punk rockers Dillinger Four, former Dead Kennedys singer Jello Biafra and others.

Of course, not just left-leaning punks are getting politically active. Bush has vocal support from many 18-to-24-year olds, including members of pro-Republican organizations Conservative Punks (www.conservativepunks.com) and Protest Warriors (www.protestwarrior.com). With opinion of Bush so divided, the United States could see a rise in voting among younger people for the first time since 1972 when participation was at 43 percent.

"I'm down with Punkvoter.com because I think it's important that more people register to vote, get involved and show up on Election Day," Jello Biafra wrote in a recent Punk Voter commentary. The head of Alternative Tentacles Records and a longtime political activist, Biafra has released a series of spoken word albums over the past two decades verbally skewering the conservative agenda, special-interest groups and crooked politicians.

"Being patriotic doesn't mean blindly following a criminal president into illegal and dangerous wars," Biafra added. "It means doing our part to take our country back from the corrupt corporate puppets who get into office because we sit on our ass and let them." ■

DON THRASHER, a former drummer of *Guided by Voices*, writes on music for *In These Times*.

Classified

Reach more than 30,000 readers by placing a classified ad in the next issue of *In These Times*.

TEXT (PER ISSUE)		DISPLAY (PER ISSUE)	
1-2	95¢ WORD	1-2	\$30 INCH
3-5	85¢ WORD	3-5	\$28 INCH
6-9	80¢ WORD	6-9	\$26 INCH
10-19	75¢ WORD	10-19	\$24 INCH
20+	65¢ WORD	20+	\$22 INCH

Please send a check or money order, your ad text, and this form to Emily Udell, Advertising Director, *In These Times*, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave, Chicago, IL 60647.

You can also reserve space by calling Emily at (773) 772-0100, x240, or by sending an e-mail to emily@inthesetimes.com

BOOKLETS



BOOKS

THE DRUM OF IMMORTALITY. Most authentic words of Buddha and Christ compared. Order: www.lucky.press.com or www.amazon.com.

SUPERPOWER AMERICA. How the Military Industrial Complex Defeated the American People. Excerpt: www.superpoweramerica.com. Order: www.amazon.com or www.barnesandnoble.com or bookstores.

TOO MANY VOICES talking? Want distraction? Try www.campusi.com/author_Joan_Leslie_Wood_ruff.htm.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

ENJOY INDEPENDENCE AND CREDIBILITY promoting proven superior 100% guaranteed water filtration products. Standardized third-party certification gives you clear marketing advantage. Experienced assistance. FREE information. (800) 706-0708.

EMPLOYMENT

MAGAZINE ART ASSISTANT. Part-time (16 hrs./wk) paid internship at *IN THESE TIMES*, the progressive news and commentary magazine. The job involves some layout, image searching, web-site

prep of text and images, information-gathering for and creation of info-graphics. Knowledge of print and internet media useful. E-mail resumé and references to artintern@inthesetimes.com

MERCHANDISE



DECOMPRESSION FOR THE DEMOCRAT™. SeeYaGeorge.com. Outrageous Political Shopping for Your Progressive State of Mind!

TOPPLE BUSH T-SHIRTS, bumper stickers and posters. Very cool designs. www.topplebush.com.

"DON'T MISUNDERESTIMATE HOW dirty your feet are!" www.BUSHDOORMAT.com.

PERSONALS

Concerned Singles
 since 1984, linking singles who care about peace, social justice, diversity, gender equity, and the environment.
 Nationwide / international. All ages.
 FREE SAMPLE: Box 444-IT,
 Lenox Dale, MA 01242; ☎ (413) 243-4350;
 OR www.concernedsingles.com

PSYCHOTHERAPY

CHICAGO PSYCHOTHERAPIST: TREAT depression, anxiety, relationship problems, etc. Specialize in concerns of artists and academics. Sliding scale, insurance. Deborah Hellerstein, LCSW, (312) 409-9516.

TOURS

RADICAL WALKING TOURS of New York City: Author/Activist Bruce Kayton leads left-wing tours all over Manhattan. (718) 492-0069,

or www.radicalwalkingtours.org.

contact us at (312) 583-9430.

VOLUNTEERS

EXPAND YOUR HORIZONS! Heartland International is seeking interested volunteers in the Chicago area to host visitors from Russia and Tunisia for two to four weeks during March, May, or June. Please

WEB SITES

WHAT'S HAPPENING? LOG on to www.sagacious-smartass.com.

NEW AGE RADICALISM <http://bothsidesnow.freesevers.com>.

www.socialistalternative.org

(continued from page 32) less-than-honorable work done by “impersonal forces” that are both nowhere and everywhere. These forces now rule the world. Trow writes, “Clever men ally themselves with these forces, while idealistic men struggle to move certain valued things out of their way.”

Moving valued things out of the way of voracious impersonal forces is a very good way of describing the preservation work of organizations like the Nature Conservancy. But it makes their save-an-acre projects in the rainforest seem desperate. It's like a family whose house is in the way of a wild-fire and they must decide whether to save Fido or grandpa's heirloom rocking chair. Either way, the house is doomed.

Even worse is that this force that will take your place has no interest in it as a place and has no place of its own. It is drifting, hungry, anonymous, but sadly familiar. It's what 7-11 did to that charming, dilapidated Victorian house on the corner. It's what ADM does to family farms. It's what Clear Channel does to local radio broadcasting. It's like a virus. It has nowhere to be that is its own. It has nothing to do but replicate itself. It will colonize you.

The place of virtue, for Trow, is in none of these places. It is in what Trow himself practices—the virtue of being both “here” and “everywhere.” People acting in a particular place with “clarity and sense” generate local virtues, running “like a small channel throughout history,” that ultimately become the spirit of a people.

Trow's attention to the relationship between honorable conduct and spirit points to a religiosity that, if practiced, would be tonic in these days of fundamentalist wrath. Cut off from a traditional channel of “clarity and sense,” we can only be a people without spirit. Cut off from the “here,” we lack spiritual nourishment. From this vantage, Pat Robertson constitutes the anti-Christ of “informal forces” broadcasting from nowhere and everywhere.

Trow's work is valuable because he shows us how to dwell within a tradition of honorable work practiced locally. He performs this virtue for us, and it is through his sense of style, conceptual inventiveness and acuity as a reader that he becomes both heroic and, strangely, lost.

Trow's virtues are lost on us because we are so much a part of the present moment ourselves. Marooned in a “nowhere” that is anything but utopic, we live in identical subdivisions and wander like phan-

toms in our rationalized “transportation systems,” denied the comfort of place and the warmth of other people. We believe our world is the business of experts and none of ours. Worst of all, we *accept* this world of unknowable origins as our world. Politicians refer to it as our “American lifestyle.” They think it's worth fighting for, and many of us seem to agree.

From Trow's point of view, this appeal to “lifestyle” is a sad confession that our lives are empty of meaning and dignity. Yet Trow cannot be heard amidst the noise made by our various wars against poorly understood things like “terror,” or “drugs,” or “evil doers.” But even if there were less of this noise and we could hear him, we wouldn't understand Trow because we have internalized the logic of impersonal forces ourselves. Impersonal forces are not only “out there” acting on us. They also are “inside” of us. We recognize this internalization in all the little “of courses” of our lives. Of course we need something called a job, money, cars, TVs, computers, gourmet gadgets and the rest of it. Of course we hope the economy prospers. It's all about the economy, stupid. But we cannot listen to all of these “of courses,” and at the same

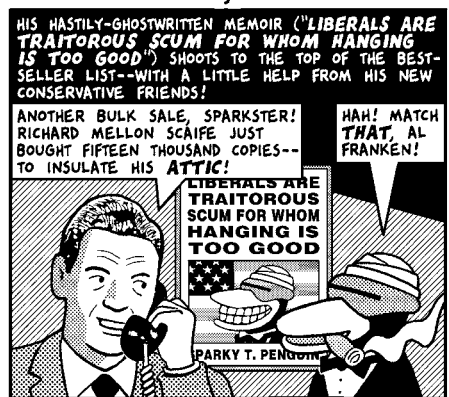
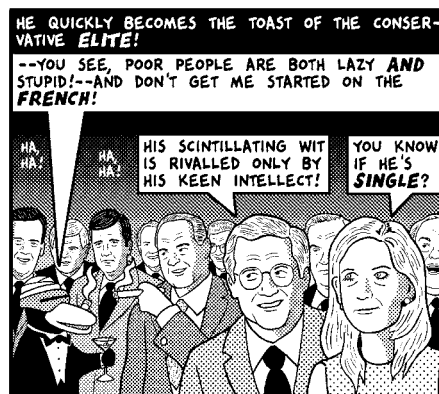
time be able to hear Trow. In this context (which Trow would call “no context”), his virtues can only be something “interesting” we heard on NPR. Now just another media commodity, Trow's ideas are quite dead and irrelevant.

Poet Robinson Jeffers was one of those “honorable men” Trow eulogizes. Hungry down in Big Sur with his red-tail hawks, Jeffers wrote in “Ave Caesar”: “We are easy to manage, a gregarious people/ Full of sentiment, clever at machines, and we love our luxuries.”

How strange to think that the final Caesar is a mere manager. It is a faceless managerial class that administers the Ruling Order of Impersonal Forces. It is Harvard legal advisors saying that their “conscience is clear” as they put a forest legacy up for sale to the highest bidder, turning a blank and pitiless gaze on the virtues of place and human capacity. For Trow, a poet like Jeffers can only be another last Mohican, a member of a vanishing tribe whose individual worth vastly exceeds that of those who will replace him. The irony here is that when this last poet goes he takes his sense of place with him, leaving us in a sad nowhere. ■

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW





Nowhere Men

BY CURTIS WHITE

George W. S. Trow is a sort of tragic hero. His essays offer us clues to how we might correct our national life. But his wisdom is likely to be lost on us, even on those who would agree with him. Like Cassandra, he can tell us things that

are true and that would save us if we could understand them, but his working premise seems to be: You will not understand what I am going to say. In fact, why we

The Harvard Black Rock Forest

By George W.S. Trow
University of Iowa Press
109 pages, \$14.95

won't understand is a large part of the truth Trow has to tell us.

In *The Harvard Black Rock Forest*, originally a 1984 *New Yorker* essay, Trow examines the history of New York's Black Rock Forest, a 3,800-acre site overlooking the Hudson River. In the early 20th Century, this devastated forest was bought by New York banker James Stillman. His son, Ernest Stillman, reclaimed the area as a demonstration forest in 1928 and bequeathed it to Harvard in 1940. Stillman left an endowment more than sufficient to maintain the forest intact in perpetuity, yet by the early '70s Harvard's directors were considering selling the land to developers. This is a familiar enough tale of betrayal of trust. But Trow, while he cares deeply about the fate of the particular (this particular for-

est and this particular instance of misplaced trust), is equally interested in what these particulars have to say about larger changes in our national character.

To describe these changes, Trow creates three kinds of "being-in-place," as a means of demonstrating how virtue comes to exist. For Trow, virtue cannot exist outside of place. Who we are depends on how we behave in a particular place. Thus, people can be:

Mostly here: When "here," people are affected by and responsive to specific local conditions. The ethos of human settlements, this is people doing what they have to do to survive. It is "what works."

Here and there: Trow defines this as the "manner of the museum." The location of a museum usually has a relation to its collection, but the tendency is to remove the substance of the collection from any sense of place. The ultimate destination of this logic is London Bridge in Arizona.

Everywhere and nowhere: The modern ethos par excellence. A strip mall is nowhere and everywhere. It has nothing to do with a particular place, and yet it is inescapably present in every American town.

Trow critiques our movement away from the virtue of "honorable men" doing the "work of men" in a particular place to the

(continued on page 31)

CURTIS WHITE is a novelist and social critic. His most recent books are *Requiem* and *The Middle Mind: Why Americans Don't Think for Themselves*.